No. 46

SURVEY

A JOURNAL of SOVIET and EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES

SURPLUS DUPLICATE

NEW WAVE in RUSSIA?

JANUARY 1963

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
6a Bedford Square, London, W.C.1

Published on behalf of the Congress for Cultural Freedom and printed by The Eastern Press, Ltd of London and Reading

SECOND CLASS POSTAGE RATES PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y.

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A Journal of Soviet and East European Studies

No. 46 **January 1963**

Editor: Walter Z. Laqueur **Associate Editor: Leopold Labedz**

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Editorial and business offices, Ilford House, 133 Oxford Street, London, W.1. Subscription rates £1 0 0 or $3 a year, post free. Single copies, 5s. or $1.

American Distributors: Eastern News Distributors Inc., 255 Seventh Avenue, New York 1, N.Y. with whom subscriptions may be entered.

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Change of Address

SURVEY

has moved to:

ILFORD HOUSE
133 OXFORD STREET
LONDON W1

Telephone no.: REGent 0592

SURVEY

reverts to

QUARTERLY

publication

Please note that there will be four issues during 1963, with the possibility of a special Supplement which will be announced in advance and charged separately.

COVER: Detail from lithograph *Peace in the World* by Georgi Daskalov

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NEW DIRECTIONS?

H. T. Willetts

IF Western interest in Soviet art and literature sometimes seems to concentrate too narrowly on their social and political implications the makers of Soviet cultural policy have themselves to blame. They measure artistic achievement by success in carrying out a social command, and draw on Western art and literature to document their case against bourgeois society.

It is not surprising that critics in the West have seized upon any sign of deviation from the regime's requirements in Soviet art and literature, whether it is an uncomfortably frank portrayal of social ills, official abuses, and spiritual malaise in the Soviet Union, or a stylistic reflection of suspect bourgeois models. If the result is a somewhat unbalanced view of Soviet art, no one in the West has the means, even if he had the will, to impose a stereotype as distorted as the official Soviet picture of Western culture. It may be absurd that the sloppy novelettes of an Aksenov find their way into English, because they are considered revealing about the mood of Soviet youth, while exquisite stories by Tendryakov, for instance, are little known in the West: but it needs the resources of a totalitarian state to turn James Aldridge into a major writer.

There is nothing reprehensible in the examination of Soviet art as one of the few sources of information about the moods of the Soviet people. Equally, it is perfectly proper, given the regime's insistence on commitment, to seek in Soviet cultural activity an insight into broader political questions. Here the hazards of interpretation are particularly grave. Some observers will see evidence of imperfect control in that diversity of opinion and style which to others suggests only that the regime is in a relatively relaxed and tolerant mood. It is tempting to suppose that the uneasy coexistence of two camps in Soviet cultural life is the result of unresolved uncertainties and tensions within the Party itself. Certainly, the violence of the language used on both sides, but particularly by those whom it would be better to call conservatives rather than Stalinists, sometimes suggests that both factions are confident of a measure of official support, and that a struggle is going on which can only end in the suppression of one of them. The poet Gribachev's accusation that the Poetry Section of the Writers' Union 'twines laurel wreaths for those who make sly digs at the Soviet system' can fairly be described as a call for a purge of the Writers' Union. But we should not draw hasty conclusions from the unconcealed divisions within the ranks of Soviet writers. More significant than Gribachev's remark, surely, is Shchipachev's comment on it, from the summit of the writers' organisation: that Gribachev knows nothing about the work of the Poetry Section, because he has stayed away from it for years, and that

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such terminology should be swept away as debris of a past gone never to return. Of course, there are embittered conservatives in other and more important circles than the uncrowned laureates' club. But it seems likely that the Gribachevs are allowed to have their say not merely because Khrushchev, as he has said, sympathised with them in their predicament after the twentieth Party congress (as he indeed should), and not at all because the political balance within the Party makes it necessary to allow conservative opinion some outlet, but for reasons which must be sought in the well-conceived cultural policy of a united and far-sighted leadership.

THE essence of Khrushchevism is the desire to substitute 'dynamic conformity' for minute regimentation. To make the arts a more effective medium of propaganda and indoctrination freer play is given to talent, within ideological limits much less constricting than they were in Stalin's time. Control is left largely in the hands of reliable and tactful senior members of the artistic professions. The critical tendencies of the intellectuals, particularly the young intellectuals, and their need to assert their individuality are recognised, and an attempt is made to accommodate, assimilate, and use them.

These policies, and some easing of restrictions on Western cultural imports, have greatly enlivened Soviet cultural life. Experimentation, it is true, has been kept within bounds. Avant-garde art of a sort which would be commonplace in Poland is produced and consumed surreptitiously in the Soviet Union. Serial technique and modern jazz have their adepts amongst young Soviet composers, but have rarely made their way into the concert halls: Shostakovich's disapproval of them is not merely an expression of personal taste but of official policy. The motto of some young Soviet painters might be 'Forward from Malevich', but their work is not exhibited. The best work of young artists at official exhibitions, in its dramatic lines and simplified colouring, may recall Guttuso, or perhaps Polish poster-art, but many of the canvases are heroic-photographic à la Brodsky, or half-heartedly and messily impressionistic. The 'metropolitan' school of poets including Evtushenko, Akhmadulina, Rozhdestvensky, and (by far the most talented) Voznessensky, who has been described by one critic as 'the extreme left of Soviet poetry', make skilful use of blank verse, imperfect rhymes, broken metre, and startling imagery, but would have seemed tame to the young Mayakovsky. What is strikingly new in the prose and verse of the best young writers is a horror of the colourless and the inflated. Modern verse, says Voznessensky, should be compact, built on the scale of a transistor radio. The best recent Soviet prose, and particularly the work of Tendryakov, is both rich and brisk but rooted in the Russian tradition. Some still younger Soviet writers are under the spell of Hemingway, and it is interesting that one of them (Gladilin), claiming the

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right to imitate foreign models, regards 'laconicism' as the modern style par excellence.

Painting, sculpture, and music have perhaps benefited mainly from a rigorous insistence on a high level of technical competence. It is in literature that the greatest improvement is observable. The improvement (especially in poetry) is partly explained by greater stylistic freedom, which makes it possible for the writer to project a distinct literary personality. But much more important is the broader range of permissible themes. The lyric poet can write about his emotional life, though if he is too candid he may be chided, like Evtushenko not so long ago, as an unmanly exhibitionist flaunting his conquests, and his boredom with them, in what is quaintly called 'alcove' poetry. With less chance of offending, the poet can freely express an immediate lyrical response to fleeting sights or incidents without worrying too much about their social significance. In the best prose, as Soviet critics justifiably claim, there has been a resolute move away from crude 'production' themes and towards the deeper study of human relations and the complexity and peculiarities of individuals. Writers have been allowed, indeed encouraged, to exhibit the evils of the Stalin period, and here, if not in their work on contemporary themes, they can give expression to a tragic view of life. Recently, authoritative Soviet critics have urged writers to lend their talents to the 'rehabilitation' of those who 'tragically perished' in the 'period of the personality cult': a theme which will perhaps be treated more frequently in brief verses, like those of Rozhdestvensky on Eikhe, published in *Izvestia*, than in extended prose, and is unlikely to tempt the playwright.

If the Soviet writer nowadays has more varied material to work on, he is also much less hampered in his use of it. In particular, he need no longer make sure that his poem or story carries a blatantly simple message that could be adequately expressed in a slogan, or that his novel is a symmetrical microcosm of Soviet society as seen by the party in its self-congratulatory utterances. 'Positive' characters may be flawed, 'negative' characters pathetic or even tragic. A man's fate is not automatically determined by his value as a producer and his loyalty to official ideals. There must, of course, be no direct challenge to the teaching of the party. Literature must embody the humanist ideals which the party claims for its own, and must not, even by implication, appear to question that claim. But there is no insistence nowadays on facile optimism, on ostentatious enthusiasm for the party in and out of season. A Kazakov may be rebuked by critics for 'gloominess', for attacking evil without making it clear what he is fighting for, so that his work is in danger of resembling a street brawl rather than a battle—but the same critics readily concede that he is one of the most talented contemporary Soviet writers. In general, the writer may leave some questions unresolved, may set his readers' brains working, not merely abuzz with

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a loud Amen. The recommendation in an excellent critical article published by *Novy Mir*, that in poetry 'the bottom should not be visible', is realised in the best of recent Soviet writing, prose and verse alike.

THE writers who have made good use of these opportunities are few in number. The great bulk of the literature published in the Soviet Union is still hackneyed and crude, some of it pseudo-populist and anti-intellectual after the manner of the notorious Kochetov. There are still plenty of poets who specialise in rhythmical flag-wagging, or in nature pieces of a timeless inanity, critics who excel chiefly in patriotic growling, novelists who draw their inspiration from elementary technical handbooks, reports to party meetings, or remote back-numbers of the thick magazines. Without the efforts of this mass of mediocrities Soviet presses could not be fed. Their output is no doubt more acceptable to the staider Soviet citizen than the new literature. Naturally their sympathies, as can be seen from the activities of the defiantly provincial and traditionalist RSFSR Writers' Union and its organ *Literatura i Zhizn*, lie with the discomfited laureate hacks rather than with the irritatingly clever and daring young men who now enjoy so much of the limelight. If literary policy were democratically determined, and their leaders freely elected by the rank and file of Soviet writers, Soviet literature would probably wear a straiter jacket than it does today.

It is not, of course, simply because they represent a harmless and possibly useful body of men that the leaders of conservative literary opinion are allowed to keep up their feud with the liberals. The acrimonious dialogue, and the jostling for influence between the two groups, helps the party in its policy of cautious liberalisation. The existence of a numerous and jealous opposition reminds the liberals that if they overstep the mark, the party can at a moment's notice swamp them, sweep them into oblivion. (It is noteworthy that when the party press speaks on literary matters—a rarer occurrence than it used to be—the voice is usually unmistakeably conservative. Some foreign observers are tempted to draw hazardous conclusions from the fact that Ilyichev's bark seems at present to be worse than his bite.) To preserve their privileges, the liberals must appear to be better communists than their rivals. This, on Khrushchev's terms, need not prevent them from being better writers.

There are two main counts on which the 'new' writers may lay themselves open to attack. The less serious is 'remoteness from the people', or highbrowism. Although the Soviet leadership has not, of course, openly responded to Ehrenburg's plea at the Second Writers' congress that the existence of different levels of taste should be recognised, some of the new literature, as a friendly critic said of Voznessensky's poem 'The Triangular Pear', may be 'popular with some sections of Soviet youth' but 'cannot reach the people at large'. More serious is the

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charge of 'nihilism', or of slandering the Soviet system—Gribachev's charge against the fashionable poets. There is nothing in recently published Soviet literature resembling 'the demagogic outbursts' after the twentieth congress. No Soviet writer is as boldly outspoken today as were some of the contributors to the second *Literaturnaya Moskva* (1956). But there are ambiguous works which readers may interpret as indirect or allegorical criticism of the system. The writer is in danger of falling into the sin of Dudintsev, of seeming to claim to be more communist not merely than the 'conservatives' but than the party at large. The poets, even in their raptures over the Khrushchev line, could often be misunderstood. Whom exactly did Evtushenko have in mind in his poem on 'Stalin's Heirs' (published in *Pravda*) when he speaks of 'those who abuse Stalin from the platforms, but at night long for the old times'? Probably no one in particular, or no one of importance, but should the Soviet reader be left to fill in names and categories for himself?

SOVIET literary critics do not explicitly discuss the division between liberals and conservatives. Lately they have given much attention to a different problem, that of relations between young and older writers, which was discussed at the end of September by the board of the Moscow section of the Writers' Union as part of the preparations for a young writers' conference in December. (Some excerpts from answers to a questionnaire on this subject addressed to representative older and younger writers will be found on later pages.)

The consensus is that there is no antagonism between 'fathers and sons' in Soviet literature, no 'literary Oedipus complex', that, in Alexander Isbach's words, the prodigal sons of Soviet literature are the invention of ideological opponents abroad. It would indeed be unrealistic to draw a line between young and older Soviet writers, but not because there is perfect harmony and continuity between the generations. The real line of cleavage is vertical, not horizontal: some of the leaders of liberal literary opinion, like Paustovsky, are old men, and many of the very young writers are die-hards. (A point which, in different terminology, some of those who answered the questionnaire themselves made.)

The Soviet pundits raise the problem of generations in order to minimise it, and with it the more genuine problem of conflicting literary trends which are represented in the oldest, the middle, and the youngest generation of Soviet writers alike. Though no division between young and old is admitted, a distinction is drawn. Viktor Konetsky was rebuked for writing to his French translator that 'the older generation grew up in fear, but we grew up in faith and hope', but gently rebuked, because the official formula itself, though more tactful, though full of praise for the heroism of the older generation in the years of revolution and construction, and for their endurance in the 'difficult times' which

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followed, nonetheless insists that there is something special about the youngest generation. The new generation, as Shchipachev puts it, 'was spiritually formed in the beneficial atmosphere created by the Twentieth Congress', and the road ahead of it 'vanishes into the open spaces of communism'. The question was, were young Soviet writers 'sufficiently prepared for this glorious but perhaps not always easy journey'? 'Have not some of them felt the lure of winding side-tracks?'

The official view of the Moscow board is that in spite of occasional lapses the young 'evaluate the past in an adult and correct way, profoundly and sincerely believe in the heroic undertaking of the communists of our country, and see in them their moral ideal'. The young in turn, while putting in pleas for diversity (Aksenov) and for stylistic freedom ('the people whom we serve do not need a lowering of esthetic criteria', said Voznessensky), made professions of loyalty and of respect for some at least of their elders.

From the remarks made during these discussions it seems certain that the Party will make greater demands on the liberal, and particularly the young liberal writers, as payment for their privileges. Stylistic conformity will not be amongst them, but the writers are urged to give some of their attention to neglected themes—the working class, the 'Party workers who have started work since the Twentieth Congress', polemics with 'our ideological opponents', the heroes and martyrs of Soviet history. Perhaps the Party's most striking success to date in assimilating a difficult young writer can be seen in the recent work of Evtushenko. Once a sort of Soviet Holden Caulfield, later a restless individualist given to 'caddish' confessions and bolshie, rather than Bolshevik, grumbling, he is now the bard of Castro's Cuba ('they call me the Cubist poet' is one of his jokes), and a writer of neat 'civic' verses which *Pravda* itself is ready to publish. In one recent poem he insists that his civic poetry is in fact 'intimate lyrical poetry', because it expresses his most intimate and precious emotions. Some other young writers may still seem, from the Party's point of view, to contribute little of social value. Voznessensky, for instance, is full of infectious *joie de vivre*, of fun and a frenzied enthusiasm for work and play; his verse tingles, coruscates, invigorates. But, as one Soviet critic has pointed out, he and some other young writers are always dashing off at great speed, they accumulate enormous mileage, but their destination is unclear. The greatest threat to the limited freedom which Soviet writers now enjoy, not at present a very serious one, is the danger that the Party may lose patience and insist that they exhibit their loyalty to its purposes more concretely and specifically.

So far, writers have found anti-Stalinism more inspiring than neo-Leninism. Nothing in the latest issues of the literary journals has aroused greater public interest than the stories about police terror and the horrors of life in Stalin's labour camps, most notably A. Solzhenitsyn's

(*continued on p. 22*)

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CONFLICT AND CHANGE IN LITERATURE

Max Hayward

DURING the last three years, since the third Writers' Congress in May 1959, the general pattern of development in post-Stalin literature has become fairly clear. This seems, therefore, to be the moment to attempt a review of the present state of affairs, of which one can perhaps speak with more confidence than at any time during the ten years since Stalin's death. The main object of this essay is to examine the new relations between the party and the writers, and to speculate on the wider implications of the changes that have taken place.

In the years since Stalin's death the relationship between the party and the writers has been fluctuating and ambiguous, but on the whole, despite occasional alarming setbacks, developments have been remarkably beneficial to literature, and one is justified in being cautiously optimistic. One may say that at the present stage the party has arrived at a position of compromise which allows both itself and the writers more room for manoeuvre—in practice, if not in theory—than at any time since the middle twenties. If it did not involve a grave loss of face through the explicit admission of past errors and the removal from the record of the central committee decree of 1946, the party could today reissue its famous resolution of 1925 as an adequate expression of its present de facto policy vis-à-vis literature and the arts.

The painfully slow evolution of this policy over the last decade has followed a course which, as one can see in retrospect, was dependent on obscure quarrels in the highest inner councils of the party, and also of course on the international situation, notably in 1956. I shall review the main stages briefly.

The sense of liberation which followed Stalin's death, combined with 'panic and disarray' among Stalin's heirs, made possible the first attempts, in cautious and Aesopian language, to challenge the party's self-arrogated right to control literature. The whole fabric of orthodox literary theory and practice was implicitly questioned in the famous articles of the *Novy Mir* group at the end of 1953 and the beginning of 1954. To a large extent this first Thaw was a genuine attempt from below to dismantle Stalinist literary orthodoxy, but looking back on it one cannot escape the feeling that it was to a certain extent licensed or even inspired by some of the panic-stricken legatees of Stalin's power. There is reasonable circumstantial evidence to suggest that the main subject of contention in the so-called collective leadership in the first few years after his death was the question as to who should get the credit for exposing the misdeeds of the late dictator, and thus secure popular backing for himself. It seems quite likely that the first Thaw may have

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been sanctioned by Beria or Malenkov as an attempt to curry favour with the intelligentsia. It is possible that the reaction against the first Thaw during 1954 was due to other members of the Presidium who were acting not so much out of conviction as out of the desire to prevent certain of their colleagues from jumping the gun on the exposure of Stalin. This much one may judge from the fact that the reaction was a comparatively mild one, and that the strictures on Pomerantsev, Ehrenburg and others were far from intimidating. Indeed at the second Writers' Congress in December 1954, despite rather unconvincing expressions of repentance for their outspokenness earlier in the year, some of the offending writers still voiced cautiously-worded pleas for a more reasonable approach to literary problems. It was clear that the die-hards—the people who are now commonly referred to as the 'dogmatists'—were still overwhelmingly strong, and could count on decisive political support at the top. At this congress, however, we find the first clear evidence of the existence of two camps in literature, and as one could see from the behaviour of Konstantin Simonov, who scurried from one to the other, their relative strength evidently depended on some configuration in the party presidium about which it would be idle to speculate, and of which it would be wrong to think crudely in terms of pro- or anti-Stalinism. It was perhaps more a question of the tempo and tactics of modifying the late dictator's policy.

In the two years after the second Writers' Congress there was an uneasy truce between the two camps, with little apparent change in the balance between them. After the twentieth CPSU congress there was a clear shift in favour of the liberals, who were of course inevitably joined by a horde of opportunists. In the extraordinary spate of writing which followed the congress, the foundations of socialist realism were virtually demolished, and there were novels, poems, and plays which in practice wiped out the specious distinction between socialist realism and critical realism. The most significant event in 1956, whose far-reaching implications I shall discuss later, was the attempt by the group of writers associated with the Almanach *Literary Moscow* to set up a quasi-autonomous organisation of *Moscow* writers outside the party-controlled Union of Soviet Writers.[1] At the time this could easily have led to the establishment of a centre of intellectual disaffection on the lines of the Petoefi circle in Budapest. Although it would hardly have been allowed to develop this far—that is, to the point of making the explosive contact with the workers which was so remarkable in Hungary—there were nevertheless real fears of such a possibility, as one may judge from certain passages in Kochetov's *Brothers Ershov*.

[1] It was probably this move to escape party control altogether that M. N. Gribachev was referring to at the twenty-second Party congress when he said: '. . . a few years ago our literature was in a very hectic state, because a small group of writers took the crude bait of the Western fishers of men. At that time there were demands, sometimes even from communists, for a revision of the Party line in literature, and the liquidation of its influence on literature. . . .'

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AT the time of the Hungarian revolution, as we know, Khrushchev not unnaturally panicked over the consequences of his own actions, and desperately tried to put a stop to the process of liberalisation. He now gave decisive political support to the die-hards among the writers. There was the famous meeting in a *dacha* near Moscow in 1957, at which Khrushchev admonished the writers in violent terms to adhere strictly to the principles of socialist realism, and never to forget that they were servants of the party. There was evident official backing for Kochetov's scurrilous anti-intellectual pastiche, with its denunciation of those Soviet writers initially responsible for the Thaw and its sinister implication that they would have been morally responsible for a Hungarian-type crisis in the Soviet Union. The lesson of the novel was that 'revisionism' is potential treachery, and that hence the intellectuals must be kept firmly under the control of the 'proletariat', i.e. of the party leadership. Another measure, which was only belatedly put into effect in December 1958, when its constituent congress was held, was the creation of the Union of Writers of the RSFSR. This was dominated by reactionaries, such as its president, L. Sobolev, who made quite a career out of baiting revisionists in the difficult months after Hungary. It was clearly designed as an answer to the attempted move by the *Literary Moscow* group. The idea was to reduce the cohesiveness of the rebellious writers concentrated in the metropolitan centres of Moscow and Leningrad by diluting them with a mass of tractable provincials, who were far too thinly spread and far too out of touch with the new mood in the capitals to be affected by the changed atmosphere. The tone of the constituent congress of the Union of Writers of the RSFSR was well characterised by the vicious attacks of several speakers on Pasternak. One of them added a new charge, namely, that of 'corrupting youth'. He alleged that two young poets, Pankratov and Kharabarov, students of the Moscow Literary Institute, had fallen under the spell of Pasternak, made 'secret' visits to his *dacha*, written verse in imitation of him, hung his portrait in the Institute hostel and—*horribile dictu*—circulated a manuscript copy of *Dr Zhivago*. For these heinous offences, he said, they had undergone their deserved punishment: expulsion from the Komsomol.

At the time all this looked far more serious than it in fact was, and there was much talk in the West of a complete reversion to Stalinist methods. There was a tendency to underestimate Khrushchev's abiding commitment to reform and his need to manoeuvre in the face of powerful opposition from the 'anti-party group'. We perhaps also overlooked the fairly obvious point that you can't have Stalinism without Stalin.

In any case, during the next two years or so the party gradually got over its panic about Hungary, and Khrushchev was able to improve his position in the Presidium. He also proved capable of learning an important lesson from the aftermath of events in Poland and Hungary, namely, that the granting of somewhat greater licence to writers and artists (he may, too, have profited here from the Yugoslav experience) does not necessarily threaten the stability of a dictatorial regime. On the

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contrary, to allow writers to practise their art without undue interference and without imposing on them absurd and largely unfulfillable demands may even contribute to the stability of the regime in post-Stalinist conditions. 1956 showed that the pent-up frustration of writers and artists is bound to take a political direction. As became particularly clear in Poland, they are less likely to cause trouble if they are allowed a certain latitude as artists. At any rate, by early 1959 Khrushchev felt confident enough to allow a further relaxation, and now, furthermore, in terms which for the first time indicated some willingness to countenance a partial abdication of the party's hitherto sacred prerogative to 'control' the work of writers and artists. He did this in his address to the third congress of Soviet Writers in May 1959.

I shall dwell on this congress and various circumstances connected with it, because it seems to me to have marked a turning-point; its momentous implications were obscured by an apparent dullness of the proceedings, from which in fact they were only saved by Khrushchev's speech. In contrast to the second congress, which was alive with the tension and exhilaration of the Thaw, the third congress, at least as far as the main proceedings were concerned, was for the most part uncontroversial and even somehow somnambulant. Ehrenburg attended only on the last day, and then did not speak. Sholokhov did not turn up at all for reasons of a personal nature. All other writers of note who took the floor were somewhat lethargic—perhaps under the influence of Surkov's monumentally tedious opening speech—and left the field to docile provincials and sycophantic fraternal delegates from abroad. This lack of excitement in the proceedings was certainly the result of deliberate restraint on the part of the 'progressive' writers, who probably did not regard the congress as a very serious forum anyway. One may surmise that the reasons for this restraint were twofold: (a) Most people knew through the grapevine that the congress would be addressed towards the end by Khrushchev, and there was probably an instinctive feeling that any sharp controversy, or any attempts to settle accounts with the dogmatists on this occasion, might put him in a bad humour and thus upset the chances of his reversing the post-Hungary trend; and, (b) it was in any case much easier to express 'progressive' opinions in journals such as *Novy Mir* and *Literary Gazette* than on a pompous official occasion in the presence of party and government representatives. Just before and during the congress, for example, each of these journals published articles which flatly contradicted the party line on literature, and reiterated in much stronger terms what Pomerantsev had said in 'On Sincerity in Literature' in 1953. The first of these articles was Ehrenburg's intriguing parable 'On rereading Chekhov'. Written in the same Aesopian manner as his 'Lessons of Stendhal' published the previous year, this reappraisal of Chekhov amounted, through skilful choice of quotation for comment, to a point-by-point demolition of the theory of socialist realism. For example, the key concept of *partiinost* was implicitly dismissed in the phrase 'in the eyes of Chekhov the highest arbiter was conscience'. Here

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Ehrenburg mentioned Chekhov's quarrel with his close friend Suvorin over the Dreyfus affair, and also his resignation from the Academy of Sciences in 1903 after the government had annulled Gorki's election. Both these examples were, needless to say, very pointed in view of Pasternak's expulsion from the Union of Writers. The socialist-realist demand for positive heroes and happy endings was laughed out of court by a quotation from Chekhov's remarks about a bad novel by Sienkiewicz: 'The purpose of the novel is to lull the bourgeoisie in its golden dreams: be true to your wife, pray with her according to the prayer book, earn money, love sport, and your well-being is assured in both this and the next world. The bourgeoisie loves so-called positive heroes and novels with a happy ending because they soothe it with the thought that one may make a fortune and yet preserve one's innocence'. Ehrenburg's comment on these words is: 'Chekhov hated the spiritual smugness, the greed and inhumanity of that world which he called "bourgeois"'. (N.B. The quotation marks are Ehrenburg's.) Perhaps the most extraordinary thing in the article are Ehrenburg's remarks on another central idea of socialist realism, namely *ideinost*, i.e. the enforced commitment to official party views. 'All words are elastic. Sometimes a man is called immoral because his accusers have a different moral code. Sometimes a work, the idea of which conflicts with the ideology of the critics, is branded as "idea-less" [*bezideiny*]. The liberals in *Russkaya Mysl* called Chekhov "unprincipled" [*besprintsipny*] because his principles did not coincide with theirs.' One interesting implication of the Ehrenburg article was that writers under the Tsarist regime had certain essential privileges—such as the possibility of conscientious objection—which are still denied them under the Soviet regime.

Konstantin Paustovsky, writing in *Literary Gazette*, made some of the same points in a more direct fashion. It was an unusually long article, occupying about half a page—a very liberal allotment considering that the article contradicted the official line of the congress. One cannot help feeling that Paustovsky was chosen as the spokesman of an influential group of progressive writers who preferred, for the reasons I have already suggested, not to air their views at the congress itself. The choice of Paustovsky for this role was a defiant gesture in itself. He had several times in the past compromised himself by outbursts in public against official literary policy, notably at a discussion of Dudintsev's novel three years previously. The publication of Paustovsky's article would scarcely have been possible without the removal of Kochetov, now the chief spokesman of the reactionaries, as editor of the strategic *Literary Gazette* and his replacement by a moderate, S. S. Smirnov. This appointment was certainly a signal to the progressives that the congress would go in their favour, and it was no doubt very demoralising to the opposite camp.

IT was Khrushchev who, whether wittingly or not, tipped the scales against the latter. The only thing that could have saved them would have been an intervention by him on their behalf, and they must have

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sensed, even if they had not been informed beforehand, that they could no longer expect any decisive support from this quarter, as they had in the year after Hungary. Their only hope was a declaration by Khrushchev that they were the guardians of party truth in matters of literature, that they were entitled to defend their argument by appeal to higher authority, and, if necessary, by censorship and other coercive methods. Their ideas are far too outworn and their arguments far too weak and contradictory to be upheld by any other means than by the silencing of their opponents. They knew perfectly well that they did not stand a chance in free competition. Khrushchev did not of course call for free literary debate, but he did condemn the only methods by which the dogmatists can in the long run survive. What is fascinating about his speech is its latent ambiguity. On the one hand, he trotted out many of the familiar clichés of a Zhdanovist type: the educational function of literature as the party's handmaiden, the primacy of the idea of *partiinost*, and the need for positive characters. Interestingly, however, he did not enunciate the latter as a principle, but rather defended it as something that had been too severely criticised. It was almost as though he was saying that positive characters are not such a bad thing after all. In the same way he was curiously defensive in a passage in which he said one should not be too hard on those writers who in the past had given too rosy a description of reality (the famous 'varnishers'). But the main thing is that all this was given as his opinion, rather than as an oracular judgment which could be used as a final argument to crush opponents. There was a note of sincerity about Khrushchev's remarks at the beginning of his speech in which he disclaimed with mock diffidence his competence as a judge of literary affairs.

What really disarmed the dogmatists in Khrushchev's speech was his insistence on tolerance. He repeatedly stressed the need to allow writers, particularly the younger writers, to find their own way and to learn from their mistakes. In one of his typical metaphors he said, 'In order to learn to swim you have to jump into the water and try your strength. . . . Let young writers develop their talents in their own way [*sobstvennymi silami*].' The dogmatists must also have been very discouraged by his quotation of the old Russian saying: 'One must not hit a man when he is down.' This refusal on the part of Khrushchev to be authoritative in matters of literature, and his insistence on tolerance, was in great contrast to his tone at the *dacha* party in 1957, when he provided the doctrinaires with excellent, unambiguous quotations in their fight against 'revisionism'. The present speech was very much more useful to the progressives, who could now effectively silence a die-hard by saying, for instance, 'as Nikita Sergeyevich said in his speech to the third Writers' Congress, "In order to learn how to swim one must be allowed to jump into the water".' The overall impression gained from Khrushchev's speech was that his main concern was not so much that writers should be ideologically pure as that they should keep the peace and not trouble the government with their interminable squabbles. To achieve this end

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he even appeared willing to relinquish to a certain extent his *ex cathedra* prerogative to control literature in the name of the party, leaving literary matters to the corporate judgment of the writers themselves. This on condition that they achieved what he called 'consolidation', by which he apparently meant that the different factions should coexist peacefully if not amicably. The most important passage in his speech, which must clearly have been understood by the majority of his audience as a hint of some relaxation of party control, was the following: 'You will ask: what guarantee is there against mistakes? It is difficult to give guarantees, because a writer, if he is a real Soviet writer, makes mistakes not consciously, not intentionally, but for such reasons as inadequate knowledge of life, incorrect premises, etc. In order to prevent this, one must remember that writers live in society, reflect the life of society, that their work must be guided by the criticism of society and that they must take account of this criticism. . . . Again you may say: "Criticise us, control us. If a work is incorrect do not print it", but you know it is not easy to decide right away what to print and what not to print. The easiest thing would be to print nothing, and then there would be no mistakes . . . but that would be stupid. Therefore, comrades, do not burden the government with the solution of such questions. Decide them for yourselves in a comradely fashion.'

This grant of relative autonomy to the writers was accompanied by guarantees that there would be no return to the 'intolerable phenomena associated with the cult of personality', and the progressives immediately availed themselves of it in order to strengthen their representation in the secretariat of the Writers' Union. The board of the Union met the day after the congress ended and elected Fedin instead of Surkov as the new Secretary-General. Surkov remained in the secretariat, but he now had to contend with two new colleagues, Tvardovsky and Panferov, both of whom he had victimised in 1954 when he succeeded in having them dismissed from their editorial posts (*Novy mir* and *Oktyabr* respectively), to which they returned only in the better climate of the first half of 1956. This new board gave some guarantee of moderation, and though not a decisive victory for the progressives it meant that the die-hards had lost their commanding position. Fedin has proved to be an excellent exponent of the policy of 'consolidation'.

The last three years have seen a steady growth in the influence of the progressives and a corresponding decline in the prestige and power of the die-hards. The extent to which matters improved after the congress is best demonstrated by the extraordinary sequel to the story of the delinquent young poets who were denounced at the constituent congress of the Union of Writers of the RSFSR in 1958. In August 1959 *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* announced in fulsome terms the arrival in Tashkent of the 'two well-known young Moscow poets' Pankratov and Kharabarov who had come there on a travel warrant [*putyovka*] issued by the central committee of the Komsomol, and had honoured the editorial board of the paper with a visit. The announcement was accompanied by

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two specimens of their work. Kharabarov's poem was entitled 'On an untrodden path'. It is a moving appeal for the right to go one's own way, and it is quite clear that the 'untrodden path' was the path which two years previously had led Kharabarov to Pasternak's *dacha* in Peredelkino and later to his expulsion from the Komsomol.

Another remarkable example of the extent to which the third Writers' Congress cleared the atmosphere was an interview given by Ehrenburg to a correspondent of *Literature and Life* in which he made an unprecedented appeal for 'solidarity' among the writers. He obviously had in mind something different from Khrushchev's 'consolidation': 'In the very difficult times of the eighties Chekhov spoke of the solidarity of the writers of that generation. Is it not time to give serious thought to the question of solidarity among writers in our Soviet epoch? Savage attacks on young writers, cliquishness, and novels in which authors settle accounts with their fellow writers [i.e. Kochetov's *Brothers Ershov*, M.H.] would be incompatible with such solidarity.'

THE emergence of two camps in literature and the apparent reluctance of the party to arbitrate between them creates a novel situation in Soviet society. It is interesting that there has been no parallel development of party control over the historians and philosophers, as far as one can judge from reading *Questions of Philosophy* and *Questions of History*. This is mainly, no doubt, because these fields are so directly concerned with the basic mythology of the Soviet regime that any free discussion here, uncontrolled by the party, would raise grave doubts as to the legitimacy of the official ideology which is, however, in any case, being undermined by much of the new writing. The main question is: why does the party acquiesce in this situation? It is self-evident that ultimately the power and authority of a totalitarian regime rests on its self-arrogated right to arbitrate in all cultural and social matters and to impose clear-cut decisions in matters of doctrine. That the party is at present either unwilling or unable to intervene in the literary dispute and apparently stands helplessly on the sidelines, condoning the rapid decline of the most ardent champions of its totalitarian authority, is, I think, not due only to the strength and courage of the progressives. Obviously the party could still intervene if it wished, and Khrushchev must understand as well as anybody the logic of the present situation and its dangers in terms of the erosion of party authority. His dilemma is that, once he has committed himself to destalinisation, not only can he not afford to antagonise that majority element among the intelligentsia which shares his reforming zeal (and which would, of course, go much farther and faster if it were not apprehensive about jeopardising the gains already made), but he is even forced into a sort of tacit alliance with them against those many middle-aged *apparatchiki* in the country who, having almost literally achieved their positions over the dead bodies of their colleagues in the Stalin era, are temperamentally incapable of accepting the consequences of the exposure of Stalin and thus admitting their own moral bankruptcy.

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Kochetov has emerged as the spokesman of these people, who might now well form the most serious opposition to Khrushchev's policy. It is not so much that they hanker after Stalin as that they are nostalgic for a new master who would allow them to play the role of faithful watchdogs. Khrushchev has gravely disappointed them, and their mood is best summed up in a brilliant passage in Abram Terz's *The Trial Begins*:

> The Master was dead.
>
> The town seemed empty as a desert. You felt like sitting on your haunches, lifting up your head and howling like a homeless dog.
>
> Dogs who have lost their masters stray about the earth and sniff the air in anguish. They never bark, they only growl. They keep their tails between their legs, or if they do wag them, they look as if they were crying.
>
> They wait, they are for ever waiting, gazing, longing: 'Come! Come and feed me! Come and kick me! Beat me as much as you like (but not too hard, if you please). Only come!' . . .
>
> Already, you can hear a whine here and there.
>
> 'Let's live in freedom and enjoy ourselves, like wolves.'

If Khrushchev does not let them off the leash at which they are straining so hard they might indeed become wolves, and he must indeed be aware of this. In the meantime, the role assigned to them is of a rather different order. The party has clearly decided on a more sophisticated way of controlling the literary situation by a system of checks and balances. In order to prevent the progressives from going too far, the die-hards are kept in being as a permanent reminder that the present trend is not irreversible.

The proceedings at the twenty-second CPSU congress in October 1961 showed that Khrushchev is even willing to allow the issue to be debated in a forum which for decades has brooked no difference of opinion. Indeed, the literary situation is the first issue ever to be debated in a real way at a party congress since Stalin's advent to power. The debate was veiled and there was no overt name-calling, but the contrast between the speeches of Kochetov and Tvardovsky, as spokesmen of the two camps, was clear enough.

Kochetov spoke on the last day of the congress, having evidently obtained permission to reply to Tvardovsky's eloquent appeal on behalf of the liberals. It is significant that Kochetov was the only speaker on this last day who did not welcome in prescribed ritualistic fashion the decision, announced the previous day, to remove Stalin's body from the mausoleum. Tvardovsky had begun his speech by welcoming what he called the 'spiritual regeneration and liberation from certain restraints' which had taken place in the period after the twentieth congress. As a token of this liberation he mentioned the rehabilitation and restoration to Soviet literature of those many writers whose names had been erased from the record as the result of the 'cult of personality', but, he said, none of this had been achieved without a struggle, and not everybody understood the 'serious and highly complicated ideological changes' which resulted from the twentieth congress; and in a clear reference to such people

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as Kochetov he warned his listeners that ' we still encounter certain residual forms of . . . previous habits of thought and of literary practice in the way in which our realities are depicted '. Despite all improvements since the twentieth congress, literature had not yet been able to take full advantage of the favourable conditions created by it, and it had often not ' followed the party in being bold and truthful '. There was still too much ' reticence, and a lack of living depth and truth '. This continuing lack of truth implied lack of trust in the Soviet reader. Tvardovsky then went on to make the subtle suggestion that, since one of the functions of literature was to assist the party in re-educating man, writers of the old school were in effect cheating the party as well. Writers who took their materials from the newspapers and party documents were compared with *kolkhozniks* who met their compulsory state deliveries of meat by buying it in the shops. It is noteworthy that not once in his speech did Tvardovsky use the terms socialist realism or *partiinost*.

In his reply to Tvardovsky, Kochetov, employing a device which is now characteristic of the literary die-hards, quoted some of those remarks in Khrushchev's speech to the third Writers' Congress which appear to be favourable to the Zhdanovist treatment of literary problems. He quoted, for instance, Khrushchev's remark that the writers should educate people primarily by *positive* examples in life. He noted with satisfaction that there had indeed been some books in recent years which laid the main emphasis on ' positive heroes ', and he picked out for special mention only such writers as Bubennov, Karavayeva, and Gonchar, who were notorious under Stalin for their abject conformity, and whom Tvardovsky certainly had in mind in speaking of those who had failed to draw any consequences from the twentieth congress. Later on, Kochetov gave a list of approved poets, such as Mykola Bazhan and Maxim Rylski, who are also distinguished only by their resistance to the ' wind of change '.

Having noted these ' successes ', Kochetov went on to denounce those who in recent years had tried to introduce into Soviet literature the ' truth ' for which Tvardovsky appealed in his address to the congress. Kochetov replied to Tvardovsky's expression of satisfaction about the rehabilitation of writers liquidated under Stalin with the following sarcastic reference to Ehrenburg: ' there are still . . . morose compilers of memoirs who look to the past or the present day rather than to the future and who, because of their distorted vision, with zeal worthy of a better cause rake around in their very fuddled memories in order to drag out into the light of day mouldering literary corpses and present them as something still capable of living '. He then referred to young poets of the type of Evtushenko in the following terms: ' We also have some poetic, as well as prosaic, chickens who have still scarcely lost their yellow down, but who are desperately anxious to be thought of as fierce fighting cocks.' The most astonishing passage in Kochetov's speech was the one in which, in total contradiction to the spirit of the congress, he called for a purge of the leadership of the Union of Writers: ' It must be said in all frankness that the congress should have been told about the state of our literary affairs

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by the leadership of the Union of Writers, but this leadership . . . to put it in military language has, as you can see yourselves, lost its combative spirit and is in need of a radical regrouping. Yet it would have had a lot to report, if it had not consigned to oblivion the main questions of our ideological and creative life.'

This was an outburst of despair which can only have brought further encouragement for the liberals. Kochetov was patently out of tune with the general mood and indeed, according to eye-witness reports, he was constantly interrupted and heckled from the floor with shouts of 'Enough!' and 'Shut up!' If Kochetov still has some protection, it is probably, as I have suggested, mainly because of the value of his rear-guard action as a check on the progressive writers. It must be assumed also that he has some political support in the higher councils. This is the only possible explanation of his appointment to the editorship of *Oktyabr* at the end of 1961, and of the fact that he was awarded the Order of Lenin on his fiftieth birthday. There has, however, been no significant intervention from above in the controversy about his new novel *The Obkom Secretary*, which was scathingly attacked in the *Literary Gazette* and *Novy Mir* as an apologia for Stalin, and weakly defended in *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, *Partiinaya Zhizn*, and *Kommunist*.

The affair of Evtushenko's 'Babi Yar' was also striking evidence of the division in the ranks of the Soviet writers and of the party's unwillingness to commit itself to either side. The reactions in *Literature and Life* to Evtushenko's vehement denunciation of Russian anti-Semitism were an ominous expression of the ugly Great Russian chauvinism that characterises the neo-Stalinists. (It is significant that a current term for them in Moscow is *chernosotentsy*.) It was wrongly assumed by some observers in the West that these reactions were officially inspired. In fact, however, it seems as though the authorities were less distressed by Evtushenko's poem than by the embarrassing display of scarcely veiled anti-Semitism which it provoked. It was an encouraging sign of the relative lack of influence of the neo-Stalinists that, while no sanctions were applied to Evtushenko, the editor of *Literature and Life* was dismissed for having published the disgraceful outbursts of Markov and Starikov. From all this and much similar evidence it would seem that the party continues to lean to a neutrality which is favourable to the progressives.

IN recent months the struggle has gone a stage further. Before the twenty-second congress the conflict was mainly a verbal one, and was conducted in a somewhat veiled way, by innuendo and anonymous aspersion in the pages of the various journals controlled by the two factions. At the moment, however, it looks as though there is a fight to control strategic institutions.

On 4 and 5 April 1962, there was a meeting of the Moscow branch of the Union of Writers, at which the liberals used the weapon of the vote

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against the dogmatists. So far we know of this extraordinary event only through a dispatch from Tatu, the Moscow correspondent of *Le Monde*. The meeting was announced in the *Literary Gazette* of 5 April, and an account was promised in a forthcoming number of the paper, but I have failed to trace it. In the meantime the facts, as reported by Tatu, have been confirmed by Soviet visitors to this country.

It was a question of appointing a new board of the Moscow branch of the Union. There were seventy-six candidates, of whom only sixty-eight were elected by secret ballot. A number of the leading dogmatists were not even put up for these elections: Kochetov, Gribachev (the editor of the export journal *Soviet Union*) who made a speech at the twenty-second congress much in the spirit of Kochetov's, and Sofronov, the editor of *Ogonyok*. Two others, Abalkin, the head of the literary section of *Pravda*, and Leonid Sobolev, the President of the Union of Writers of the RSFSR, were actually voted off the board. On the other hand, three well-known progressives were voted on to it. These were Evtushenko, his friend Andrei Voznessensky, and the critic Maryamov, who mercilessly dissected Kochetov's novel in *Novy Mir* at the beginning of the year.

As far as one knows, this may be the first occasion for many years on which a vote in the Soviet Union has really been used to express the will of the majority, and it is obviously a precedent of momentous importance.

Another interesting sign of the times was a meeting of the board of the Union of Writers of the RSFSR held in Rostov-on-Don on 13 May. One has the impression from reading accounts of this 'Forum of the Writers of the South' that the reactionaries who control this organisation might well have been shouted down if they had held their meeting in Moscow. They evidently felt much more at ease down on the Don, not too far away from their patron, Sholokhov, who did not, however, honour them with his presence. It is a nice irony that the Union of Writers of the RSFSR, which was originally created in 1958 in order to neutralise the Moscow writers by means of an invasion from the provinces, must now apparently slink out of the capital to hold a meeting.

There was open talk at the meeting about the intolerable atmosphere in Moscow. One of the speakers, Semyon Babayevsky (the author of that egregious Stalinist novel, *Cavalier of the Golden Star*) talked darkly about attempts in Moscow to deprive their organisation of its wheels (*snyat kolyosa s nashevo pravleniya*) and hence to slow down the advance of Soviet literature into the communist future. Another speaker, Anatoli Kalinin,[2] assured the gathering that they would never allow this to happen, and gave his audience cold comfort by saying that it was only in Moscow that one found all the disturbing new trends such as 'modernism' and enthusiasm for Western styles. There were the usual innuendoes about

[2] This speaker also made a personal attack on Evtushenko, and was rebuked by Evtushenko's friend, Robert Rozhdestvensky, in *Literary Gazette* a few weeks later.

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Evtushenko and other young writers, and there were rather pathetic attempts to discount their influence. They were written off as ephemeral phenomena who confuse lasting glory with cheap and transient popularity. In his closing remarks, for instance, Sobolev compared them with a certain Air Force mechanic who, dreaming of the fame of the legendary Herostratus, had illicitly flown a plane over his aerodrome and performed all kinds of stunts for half an hour only to be rewarded for his pains by twenty-four hours' confinement to barracks. Sobolev also scorned the idea of the wheels being taken off 'progressive' Soviet literature because, as he said, it is not a cart but a much more efficient vehicle equipped with ball-bearings. There is a clear reference here to Evtushenko's poem entitled 'Rockets and Carts', in which he contrasts the technology of the age of sputniks with the obsolete literature and art of socialist realism.

* * * *

I SHOULD like to conclude with a few reflections on the importance of all these developments for the Soviet regime and Soviet society as a whole. As I have said, literature is the only field of Soviet cultural or social activity in which overt differences of an ideological nature are allowed to manifest themselves. Whether the reasons I have suggested are right or wrong, the fact itself is indisputable. Though perhaps the party is for the time being able to manipulate the situation to its own short-term political advantage, it has willy-nilly allowed literature to become a forum —the only one so far—in which certain ideological alternatives may to a certain extent be openly ventilated. As we saw, this happened even at the last party congress. By tolerating this fissiparous trend, the party is inevitably preparing the ground for a formidable challenge to the legitimacy of its rule, and the credentials by which it claims to have the right to control all aspects of life in the country.

With their vastly extended freedom of expression, it is unlikely that the writers will rest content with a purely passive role in society. Freedom is useless and even frustrating if it cannot be used to promote social and political change. What we may envisage as a first step is a renewal of the demand first voiced in 1956 by the *Literary Moscow* group for an autonomous writers' organisation. The tactics this time, as we can see from the results of the elections to the board of the Moscow branch of the Union of Writers, appear to be the infiltration of existing organisations. If this were achieved, it would be a major breach in the totalitarian structure. How far the party is aware of this possibility, and the extent to which it would go in trying to put a stop to it, remains to be seen.

If the mood expressed in the following passage from the latest instalment of Ehrenburg's memoirs—which includes a well-nigh incredible defence of the Spanish anarchists during the Spanish Civil War—becomes predominant among the Soviet intelligentsia, then the party has indeed every reason to be disturbed about the maintenance of its authority: '*Communismo libertario*—"free communism". All the anarchists spoke

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about this and nearly all of them believed in it. They tried to prove—and they made their point well—that there can be no communism without freedom. . . . In an old notebook I have found the words of a French author (I don't remember who) from whom I copied out these words: " The unfortunate thing about a despotism is not that it does not love people, but that it loves them too much and trusts them too little ".'

(*continued from p. 8*)

'Day in the life of Ivan Denisovich' (*Novy Mir*, 1962, no. 11), and V. Kozhevnikov's bitterly satirical 'Fleeting Day' (*Znamya*, 1962, no. 10). *Izvestia* (6 November) and *Pravda* (11 November) have published short stories on the same theme. Direct references to Stalin himself are more and more frequent and scathing in literature of this kind: he is a cold-blooded monster, but also ludicrous in his pretensions, contemptuous of the common people, and ridiculed by them.

The value of this literature to the regime is, of course, in the contrast between the Stalin and the Khrushchev periods, whether or not the writers stress it. By stamping such work—and Evtushenko's civic poems—with its approval, the Party shows that it sees or chooses to see no ambiguity in them, no implied criticism of the Soviet system as a whole. Critics with a firm grasp of the Khrushchev line are at hand to elaborate the lessons of reticent works. One of the most skilful of them, V. Yermilov, in a *Pravda* review of the stories by Solzhenitsyn and Kozhevnikov, managed in passing to identify the anonymous group amongst 'Stalin's Heirs': they are of course merely rather unimportant bureaucrats set in the old Stalinist ways—slanderers, cheats, quotation-mongers, lovers of vulgar display. . . .

There is little reason to fear that the Party will try to force Soviet writers and artists back on to a single, narrow road; but in all likelihood it will make a more resolute effort to guide them along their new and various roads, to make sure that they are all bound for the same destination.

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DOCUMENT

The Old and the Young in Literature

(*In anticipation of a conference to be held in December on the work of young Soviet writers, the magazine* Voprosy Literatury *addressed a questionnaire to representatives of the middle and the younger generations in Soviet literature. The older writers were asked to give their opinion on the work of their juniors. The young writers were asked about their experience of life, the 'problems, characters, and conflicts' which they considered of greatest contemporary significance, their methods of collecting material, their views on the writer's educational role, traditional and contemporary influences on their work, the help they had received from their senior colleagues, and their future plans. Answers to these questions were published in* Voprosy Literatury, 1962, No. 9. *The excerpts which follow were chosen to illustrate the diversity of opinion amongst older and younger writers alike, though amongst the younger writers more space has been given to the avant-garde than to the (more numerous) traditionalists, with whose views Western readers are sufficiently familiar. Perhaps the most instructive contrasts are those between the minatory Surkov and the conciliatory Simonov, in the senior group, and between the highbrow Voznessensky and the philistine nationalist Firsov amongst the younger writers.*)

I

Older Writers on their Younger Colleagues

Stepan Zlobin: I personally think that there is no special 'young literature' problem in the USSR. Our literature develops in one single process. In Soviet literature, as I have had occasion to remark when speaking in public, there is no problem of 'fathers and sons', nor is there a literary 'Oedipus complex'. The friendship between the generations results from the identity of their social and esthetic ideals. Amongst our literary elders there are quite a lot who are at one with youth in temperament, in the demands which they make upon a work of literature and in their response to life. There are, however, even among young writers, some whose attitude is that of past decades. . . .

Sometimes our youth suffers from 'infantile disorders' as in *Starry Ticket*, the earlier poems of Evtushenko, or the latest poems of Voznessensky.

There is nothing alarming about these disorders. They are those from which we ourselves suffered in our time. They are all *our* young people, Soviet youth. Their outbursts are directed not against life, but against humbugging dogmatism, which cannot get beyond the school textbooks and the banal stereotypes of bad journalism. When young people come into touch with the reality of modern life on our planet and see that the world cannot be confined within the narrow brackets of dogma and regimentation, then the truth expressed in their writings coincides with

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the truth of the great October, Lenin's truth, which illumined our youth, too.

Six years ago Evtushenko was not quite so cheap and trivial as the parody on him written and triumphantly noised abroad by the Rostov prose writer, A. Kalinin, but he could not get away from boudoir themes. In recent years, as he has grown older, he has become a poet of revolutionary Cuba, a bard of the International.

The only thing that distinguishes the young—as in any other profession—is their lack of experience, craftsmanship, determination and polish. But we, too, acquired a thoughtful and exacting attitude to our work only with the years.

Youth becomes mature through its contact with life and joins our ranks not in order to refute us, nor yet to imitate us, but to carry on our common cause.

Vsevolod Ivanov: Having read several hundred manuscripts by beginners as well as their autobiographies, and having heard them talk about themselves, I have come to the conclusion that we have almost *no* writers who do not know life, with all its complications and difficulties, to say nothing of its joys.

Most of the beginners *do* know life. Certainly they know it as well as we writers of an older generation did when we were *beginning* our literary career. The trouble is that many young writers do not know how to express in images their knowledge and understanding of life.

This is what they must be taught.

And their teachers must be strict, demanding, just, and inspiring.

The young writer should be made to realise that new recruits are highly prized in war—they are strong, tough, they long for heroic deeds, they are bold because youth is naturally bold. But experienced soldiers who have been at the front are prized no less, if not more; they fully understand what war means, and they know how to fight the enemy.

Literature is a war against ignorance, obscurantism, uncouthness, inhumanity; a war for the good and for the love of humankind. And in this war, in this battle, every soldier of literature must know how to fight, must indeed have a virtuoso's mastery of his weapon—the weapon of words.

Otherwise, what is the result? We make a big bang, but miss the target.

Writers are numerous, but virtuosity with words is rare.

A. Karaganov: Every new literary generation has its own words, its own method of expression. Sometimes this originality goes to the length of all-out rebelliousness, and then the problem of 'sons and fathers' becomes unhealthily acute. The ground for such sharp conflict does not exist here. But there remains the natural movement of artistic thought in the process of creative exploration—all the active, vital forces of literature take part in it. And there remains also the healthy aspiration of the young to say something really new and original.

We should not fear this aspiration. When developing normally it is not at all incompatible with continuity between generations or with tradition, which inevitably becomes enfeebled without the creative contribution of young writers.

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One would think all this to be elementary. But sometimes even the elementary has to be repeated. We still come across cases where the present-day works of young writers are criticised because they do not resemble the approved models of yesterday. . . .

Such critics do not take into consideration the fact that the dissimilarity in question reveals not only the audacity of new talent, its thirst for experiment and innovation, which are very important in art, but also the natural, inevitable, objective expression of the young generation's experience, practical and spiritual.

Among the Komsomols of the sixties we all notice many peculiarities which were unknown to us, Komsomols of the thirties: the lives of different generations run different courses. These peculiarities appear as shortcomings when seen not soberly, in historical perspective, but through the eyes of pompous, fault-finding old age. But finding fault with reality has never helped anything. . . .

It's a very tricky thing—to sense, to understand, to appreciate fully and to show in the Komsomols of the sixties the qualities handed down to them from the revolutionary generations, the steadfast traits of the Soviet character, as well as all that is new and specific and belongs exclusively to the Komsomols of the sixties. Writers of different generations have striven to do this, with varying success. But who, if not the writers whose biographies closely resemble those of their heroes, can find specially apt and inspired words to say about them? . . .

The anxiety of the young writer to say something new and fresh, and to say it in his own way, becomes a great creative incentive when it is combined with a heightened sense of responsibility towards the reader, the nation, and history. The ambition to say something new and original is not, in itself, decisive. It is very important that what he says should be in the spirit of the Party, truthful. Otherwise originality can easily degenerate into a literary game.

Konstantin Simonov: When I think of the forthcoming writers' meetings and plenums devoted to our young literature, two thoughts come into my head which I consider important. First, in order that the talk about young literature should be serious and fruitful we must concentrate not on the ' problem of young literature ', but on all the most important and complex problems of our life and on the way in which young writers tackle these problems.

The starting point of our discussions should be life and not wordy controversy about whether generations number four, four and a half, and five do or do not exist in our poetry or prose, and whether they do or do not stand in opposition to the first, second, or third generations. We should talk less about generations in a vague scholastic way, and instead read more of what the young poets and novelists write and publish. . . .

Secondly, in various literary disputes recently the words ' we ' and ' they ', ' they ' and ' we ' have been frequently used. Personally I feel that in this tendentious segregation there is something artificial, unprincipled, and alien to the spirit of our literature. Bringing this matter on to a personal plane I must say that there are writers of the same age as myself with whom I have no wish to identify myself as ' we ' when I read their works. . . . At the same time there are writers belonging to an older generation than my own, and some who have only just published

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their first books, of whom I would like to say 'we'. Age is not the criterion, but something much more important—the similarity of our views on the life of society and the meaning of literature

Anatoly Sofronov: We were all young once. We did not know the answer to a thousand problems, which we have not solved to this day. But every writer has an age, belongs to a certain generation. This does not mean, of course, that a writer should blindly follow his contemporaries. Certainly not. But it does mean that he expresses his own views, his own attitude towards life, which does not necessarily have to coincide, to be identical with that of other writers, whether of his own or of other generations. This raises the question of broadmindedness in our attitude both to present-day literature, and to that which our predecessors have bequeathed us.

Youth likes to overthrow authorities. Why not? It's quite a jolly pastime, but I would like to say, with reference to today's literature, how in the thirties people who were then twenty or so years of age, regarded older writers. I remember how in the 'Rosselmash' works where I spent my youth and got my first lessons in writing, we always received with particular emotion those who came to us from Moscow. [To us they were] people who had stepped down from the high Parnassus which they then represented straight into our workshops, into the midst of our turbulent life. Some things in them pleased us, others were not to our liking, but we accepted them. We took them to our hearts because they had come to us, bringing with them poetry. Now all this is simpler. Now writers appear in public a lot. Meetings with young writers have become a part of our life, of our everyday literary experience. . . .

It seems strange when sometimes this or that poet, novelist or playwright puts up a sort of fence of 'non-acceptance' against the work which a literary colleague is doing or that which older writers have done before him. I shall never forget a conversation I had with Fadeyev. It was after another long and exhausting meeting at the Writers' Union in Vorovsky Street. We were sitting at a table. The talk was of songs. It is well known that Fadeyev liked songs and was good at singing them. Lebedev-Kumach was dead then. Fadeyev said: To this day I cannot forgive myself that I did not at first understand Kumach's songs, because they are so simple on the surface, and sometimes look as though they were written for an anthology. Just think how exactly right are the words: *Broad is my native land—Many are its woods, fields and rivers—I know no other land like it—Where a man can breathe so freely.* I fought against it, so to say, but still those words stayed in my memory.

Alexei Surkov: These days the development of young prose and poetry presents quite a variegated picture. There are new books, isolated poems, stories, novels, which markedly strive to continue the traditions of Soviet literature in the last decades. As a rule these new authors make their own contribution to literature and do not simply repeat their predecessors and neighbours. In some young writers of today who are pushed to the front there is a desire, natural enough in the young, to differ at any cost from the writers of the older generation and from their neighbours. This desire is highly commendable if it is based on a truly new and fresh approach to life, to man, if it is dictated by a genuine

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knowledge of and involvement in the life of the writer's contemporaries. But it sometimes happens that we consider as innovators people who repeat experiments which were already forgotten fifteen or twenty years ago. Some critics, who are not well read in the verses of Khlebnikov, Pasternak, and Tsvetaeva, hand out inventors' patents to people who are more or less painstaking pupils [of those poets]. . . .

I am absolutely sure that the conference [of young writers to be held in December] will provide an opportunity to eliminate all uncertainties and obscurities in the matter of continuity between the generations of Soviet writers. I am also sure that at the conference the question of the relation between word and deed is bound to arise, that is to say, the relation between an author's *curriculum vitae* and his work.

Many years of observation . . . tell me that the early professionalisation and canonisation of this or that writer more often than not leads to the early fading of his brilliant and unique talent before it has borne fruit.

The discussion will show where the boundary of genuine creative daring and originality is set, and where we are confronted with manifestations of an ephemeral vogue. This is not a new phenomenon. It was the same in the twenties, thirties, forties, and fifties. And it will evidently be the same in future.

II

Young Writers on Themselves

Vasily Aksenov: I am still interested in the process by which the characters of young people in the Soviet Union are formed. Lately, I have also started taking an interest in the processes which go on in characters already fully developed.

To overcome the inertia of the personality cult in public life and in the soul of man is in my view one of the major problems of our time. A very important problem, I think, is the relation between science and life. The spiritual life of the new technical intelligentsia—isn't that interesting?

So—there are conflicts, we don't have to invent them. . . .

While keeping in mind the educational significance of literature, the writer should avoid moralising and clumsily didactic schematicism like the plague.

Surely life is after all a better teacher than literature. Unconditional loyalty to the truth of life—in this is our guarantee that the writer will play an effective part in shaping the Man of the Future. . . .

(Q. What traditions in classical and modern literature are particularly important to you?)

The traditions of Russian classical literature, of Tolstoy and Chekhov. I am also immensely interested in Soviet literature of the twenties and the early thirties. The reading of Babel and Andrei Platonov is a good schooling.

Hemingway, Faulkner, Böll, Salinger—this is another first-class school, quite apart from the enjoyment their books give.

I have not made the acquaintance of . . . the French 'new novel', but from articles and what I hear I can imagine that it is not very interesting.

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Experiments in form, in my view, should be carried on in every direction. Failures and breakdowns are the inevitable accompaniment of experiment—but in the end literary progress is inevitable.

Andrei Voznessensky: The main problem of contemporary literature is that of deeper insight, into the soul of man, into the interior of consciousness.

Communism comes by way of the heart. The heart is within the province of poetry.

I don't think that closeness to his literary predecessors is very good for a writer. 'Incest' leads to degeneracy. I have got more from Rublev, Jean Miro, and the later Corbusier than from Byron.

In poetry as in architecture technique has made the highest achievement. You can balance a building on a needle's point. Rhyme has become boring. Every fifth-former can rhyme brilliantly. In our poetry the future is with the technique of association. Metaphorism reflects the interconnection between phenomena, the way in which they interpenetrate and are transformed one into another. . . .

Form must be lucid, bottomlessly disturbing, and full of higher meaning, like a sky in which only radar can sense the presence of an aeroplane.

Vladimir Gordeichev: In my view a problem of immediate importance is the personal responsibility of the so-called 'little man' for everything, great or small, that goes on around him. I am alarmed by indifference (which you often come across in the countryside at least) to things which concern everybody and about which every individual can do something, by those whose attitude is 'put your trust in uncle', 'it's none of my business', 'the bosses know best'. This indifference is to a considerable extent . . . the result of substituting the notorious 'nuts and bolts' idea for Lenin's teaching on the role of the ordinary man as the maker and moving force of history.

Ivan Drach (Ukrainian): I am disturbed by the pessimistic views and the scepticism of some of the young people of my generation. The writer must help people to understand the reasons for this stultifying phenomenon, help them to overcome it. We must take the offensive against the lingering effects, which still survive in many spheres of Soviet life, of the sad past. . . . We must free ourselves completely from the fashionable influence of the *weltschmerz*, the pessimism of Western European youth.

Evgeny Evtushenko: Maturity means both the ability to see the good in people and to fight for it. That is why I have remained an optimist. But my optimism is not light blue or pink in colour. All the colours that exist, including black, enter into it.

I must note here that my real experience of life did not come before I started my work as a writer, but followed on rather belatedly. . . .

My very first verses were published in *Sovetsky Sport* in 1949. They were devoted to a comparative analysis of the morality of American and Soviet sportsmen. They were only rather remotely connected with poetry. My only excuse is that I was fifteen years old at the time and very much wanted to get into print. . . .

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I envisage communism symbolically, as a state in which truth is president, and tenderness and strictness are ministers. In my opinion, these two ministers will be enough under communism.

And so: the poet must be a sort of prototype of this communist state. To begin with, the poet must be tender towards people, love them and understand them. But something else is there, is a second essential: the poet must be uncompromisingly strict with himself, and towards the faults of other people. I want to point out that a writer has the right to be stern and unsparing to other people only if he also knows how to be tender with them.

I try to learn from everybody—even from minor writers. Some writers, perhaps, have existed just to write one single line which is of value to us. This more than justifies their existence. I shall be happy if just one line of mine helps those who come after us. . . .

However eclectic it may seem, I should like to combine in my poetry certain characteristic features of Mayakovsky, Blok, Esenin, and Pasternak. How successful I am in this I, of course, do not know.

Perch Zeitunyants (Armenian): The contemporary problem which most concerns me (I don't regard it as the most important, it is simply of particular concern to me as a writer and it seems a very real and immediate one) is the problem of the generations, their mutual relations and their attitudes to each other.

Yury Kazakov: Happiness and its nature, suffering and how to overcome it, moral duty to the people, love, the attainment of self-understanding, attitudes to work, the vitality of vile instincts—these are some of the problems which occupy me. I am continually meeting these problems, posed in various ways, in the works of all our more talented writers of prose and verse. . . .

I do not think that literature immediately and automatically influences the life of man and his moral condition. Look for example at the large number of unfair and dishonest critics who have, of course, read Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Hemingway, but have learnt nothing from them.

At the same time I do believe in the educational power of literature. And I think that a writer who all his life preaches man's goodness, truth, and beauty does after all elevate the moral qualities of his contemporaries and posterity—of those of course who have the will to read and to think about what they read. But I will not take it on myself to judge how profound are the qualitative changes which take place in man under the influence of literature. It varies with every individual, probably.

It is important that the writer should try to improve himself morally —then he will be able and will have the right to teach others something. If the writer's spiritual level is low the effects of this inexorably show themselves in his books. Reading these books is either uninteresting or depressing. And sometimes it makes you feel ashamed.

Valery Osipov: The most immediate problems of our day, I think, are those of the inevitable clash between two types of people: those whose passions and convictions were formed in the period when the personality cult flourished, and those who actively champion the ideas of the twentieth and twenty-second congresses of our Party. . . .

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The most promising new developments in the field of artistic form seem to lie in the legacy which Ernest Hemingway left to the literature of the future.

Vladimir Firsov: I think that one of the writer's main tasks is the inculcation in the young generation of a feeling of national pride, a feeling of lofty love for their native land. A writer in my view has an obligation to develop this feeling of responsibility to the people which deprives us of the moral right to live for ourselves, blindly kow-towing to the vogue which reaches us from the West, crooning the latest bit of jazz and spitting on the beautiful songs which gush from the depths of the people's exuberant heart. Modernistic art in the West requires a reader or viewer devoid of the capacity for independent thought, because he has to take everything on trust. If a canvas, on which all the colours in the palette have been chaotically splashed, is called 'Love in Outer Space', then it must be love in outer space. And if you venture to voice doubt then they'll tell you that you are not intellectually adult enough to understand real art. This then is the Soviet writer's task—to train the people of a communist society in the spirit of national traditions, which do not at all stand in the way of originality, but on the contrary, as time has shown, favour innovation.

COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN SOCIETY AND HISTORY

An International Quarterly

Volume V, Number 3 (March 1963)

COMPARATIVE STUDY IN AMERICAN HISTORY

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Comparative Studies in Society and History appears four times a year. Annual subscriptions $6.00 (U.S.A.) or the equivalent in other currencies payable through booksellers or directly to the publisher: Mouton & Co., The Hague, The Netherlands.

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THE YOUNG POETS

Pierre Forgues

SURELY there is no country in which so much poetry is published as in the USSR. Everything there is a pretext for a poem: a decree of the Supreme Soviet, the visit of a foreign communist leader, indeed, any random cutting from a newspaper, and, it goes without saying, any congress of the Party. *Izvestiya* and *Pravda* publish poems several times a week: the austere and boring *Pravda* regales its readers regularly with articles written in verse by Alexander Nikolaev, the Ukrainian Stepan Oleinik, or the famous Bezymenski, commenting upon events of internal or international politics.

And if we turn to the literary journals and reviews the importance of poetry seems to be greater still: every number of the *Literaturnaia Gazeta* publishes the poems of one or more, sometimes of as many as five poets. The list of contents of the review *Yunost* for all twelve numbers of the year 1961 contains the names of 122 poets who have had one or several of their poems printed in the review during that time. *Yunost* is, moreover, far from being a review that specialises in poetry: it is subtitled 'a literary, artistic, social, and political monthly.'

In comparison with Western countries, where poets, especially young ones, have so much difficulty in publishing far fewer works, and still more in finding a public for them, one is tempted to think of the USSR as a 'paradise of poetry'. But one has only to turn from the statistics of published works to the reading of them to see that this is unhappily not the case. In the domain of poetry the USSR has not yet made the leap from quantity to quality—a fact, moreover, to which Alexander Tvardovski drew discreet attention in his speech to the Third Congress of Soviet Writers in May 1959.[1] You could transpose the authors' names on the collected poems of dozens of poets without anyone noticing it. The abundance is mostly that of interchangeable products, abortions that one is surprised to find under the title of 'poems'. The columns of verse that Oleinik and Bezymenski perpetrate in *Pravda* only present in an extreme form what Stalin wanted poetry to be reduced to: a discursive illustration of the main themes of governmental policy. Poetry was to be the servant of the Politbureau, an esthetic addition, of the same order as a lick of paint, to the Marshal's speeches.

The Central Committee decisions of 14 and 16 August and 16 September 1946, striking at Anna Akhmatova among others and at the reviews *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, mark a decisive moment in the history of Soviet poetry. From that date, Soviet poetry was strictly confined to its function as an instrument of propaganda. From 1946 to 1953 verse was still published in the USSR, but poetry had disappeared.

[1] A. Tvardovski: *Stati i Zametki o Literature* (Moscow, 1961), pp. 183–195.

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The kind of embarrassment then felt by those who preferred to submit completely rather than keep silence is manifested in the extraordinary homage lately rendered by the old Stalinist 'poet' Alexis Surkov to Anna Akhmatova, who was condemned to silence from 1946. In a postscript for the collection of her poems published in Moscow in 1961, this poet-policeman writes:

> By the poems she wrote during the last fifteen years Anna Akhmatova has won a special personal position in contemporary Soviet poetry, a position she did not pay for by any moral or creative compromise.

The authors of the *History of Soviet Literature* were also highly embarrassed when they came to their third volume, covering the period from 1941 to 1957, and had to analyse the work of the outstanding writers of that epoch. With the prose writers they could get by; the authors could find eleven names worthy of a monograph apiece. For poetry they could find only five: Tikhonov, Marshak, Selvinski, Surkov, and Tvardovski; and to help fill this awkward gap the authors analyse the work of Konstantin Simonov almost solely from the point of view of his poetic production. If we add that, of the above-named poets, Marshak is hardly known except by his verses for children and his translations, and that Surkov is only a literary official, we have a pretty good idea of the void into which Stalinism precipitated Soviet poetry after the war. Apart from the regularity of the lines, there was nothing to distinguish a poem from an article in *Pravda*.

THE death of Stalin was at once felt by the writers as a possibility of deliverance. It was a woman poet who inaugurated the new era: Olga Bergoltz, who had spent several months in prison under Stalin. She wrote (*Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 16 April 1953), that Soviet lyrical poetry was very nearly non-existent, crushed as it was under the weight of description and objective analysis; the 'I' would have to be brought back into poetry. Olga Bergoltz's own attempts to revive Soviet lyricism are of less importance than the clarity with which she raised what was then a vital problem: the poet's right to seek the sources of poetry in himself and not only in the universe of objects. Her love poems, though they are less academic and less discursive than those of the all-too-official Stepan Shchipachev, are, however, rather flat.

Although the era of the thaw had been thus heralded by a poet, the years 1954 to 1957 were marked by no great development in poetry; it was mainly in prose that the thaw produced the most interesting upheavals. Against a score of novels which, on one point or another, broke the tables of the law of socialist realism, one can cite only a very few works of poetry: *The Seven Days of the Week*, by Semion Kirsanov (*Novy Mir*, September 1956); Kirsanov had, moreover, been attacked as early as 1925–28 for petty-bourgeois tendencies, and had then cleared himself of the accusation by publishing conformist works such as

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Piatiletka and *Comrade Marx*; *Stantsiya Zima*, by Evgeny Evtushenko, published in the review *Oktyabr* in October 1956; the poems of Julie Neuman published in the second volume of *Literaturnaia Moskva*, including the famous *1941*. Since that date, however, Neuman has not, to my knowledge, published anything but some translations into Russian from Soviet poets writing in Yiddish.

Like the novels and short stories of that period which diverge a little from the beaten tracks, these poems are works of social criticism; their content depends upon external contingencies as much as upon a predetermined poetic conception. The use of allusion, of periphrasis, of the symbol, and the search for the oblique word, are recommended by prudence as much as by poetic reflection.

It is after the 'interval of freedom' that a new Soviet poetry begins to hatch out—a fact, moreover, that casts some doubt on the very notion of the 'interval of liberty'. This new poetry arises plainly in reaction against the previous generation: that is underlined in Soviet criticism itself. In the May 1961 issue of the review *Neva*, the critic, V. Druzin, divides Soviet poets of today into two groups: those who are 'free from all decadent influences', and those who are 'under the influence of decadent ideas', otherwise classed as the 'good' and the 'bad' poets. Among the good, Druzin lists N. Aseyev, M. Svetlov, S. Smirnov, A. Kovalenkov, V. Kulemin, Margarita Aliger, N. Anfitserov, A. Mezhirov and S. Podelkov. In the category of the decadent, 'led by the venerable Kirsanov and the younger Evtushenko', Druzin places, besides those two poets, Yuri Pankratov, Victor Bokov, F. Evseyeva, D. Samoilov, Yuri Levitanski, and E. Kotliar. In the January 1961 number of *Novy Mir*, the critics Menshutin and Siniavski declare that 'in their combative ardour, the young are about to leave their poetic elders behind', and the two critics are so conscious of a division of Soviet poetry into two camps that they place Andrey Voznessenski on 'the extreme left of the young poets of today'.

These young poets are not emerging, however, in the midst of a complete desert. Not to mention Semion Kirsanov and Tvardovski, N. Zabolotski (who died in 1958) and Leonid Martynov (born in 1905) have played the part of 'caretakers' in the domain of poetry that Konstantin Paustovski has played in prose. The pantheist lyricism of the former and the fantastic lyricism of the latter have often had rough treatment from the official critics, who deplore such disregard of the canons of socialist realism: their works have kept alive the idea of a poetry not necessarily tied to the contingencies of political or social action. But Zabolotski has never rediscovered the satirical epic view of his *Triumph of Agriculture* (1929), and Martynov's fantasy is very thin and garrulous. Both have remained too subservient to the traditional rhetoric of speech-making. One might, at a pinch, add to these two names that of Shchipachev, who has hardly ever ceased to write poems 'of

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love '[2] which strike one as too calm and cold not to be fabrications; still, they bear witness to the truth that poetry need not be a political weapon or an ideological tool. After all, there are very few Soviet poems in which anyone tells us of a 'light and partly-dressed woman' of 'breasts' or 'caresses'! But after having written:

In the shade the breeze caresses her,
She is light and partly dressed. . . .

the poet goes on:

Where is the kitchen, then? . . .

showing the solidly prosaic temperament which often takes pleasure in lines like these:

In July the cool dews
Moisten chilly the hands.
There's a fragrance of roses
In the blooms of potato plants. . . .

Zabolotski, Martynov, Shchipachev, Kirsanov—all these did little to fill the gap left by the suicide of Tsvetaeva and the imposition of silence upon Akhmatova and Pasternak.

TO the four names above, we might be tempted to add that of Alexander Tvardovski. He is an institution in contemporary Soviet literature. Editor of *Novy Mir*, Lenin prize-winner in 1961, delegate to the 22nd CPSU congress, he is already regarded as a classic of Soviet literature, and worthy of a monograph 41 pages long in the latest *History of Soviet Literature* published by the Academy of Sciences. The last edition of the handbook of Soviet literature for high schools, written by A. Dementiev, E. Naumov, and L. Plotkin, devotes a whole chapter to him, an honour that is bestowed upon only two other living writers: Sholokhov and Issakovski.

Born in 1910, Tvardovski is the youngest representative of the generation born before the first World War. In 1936 he published *The Country of Muravia*, the hero of which, Nikita Morgunok, symbolised the Soviet peasant in search of the land of happiness; in 1942 *Vasili Tiorkin*, a classic portrait of the Soviet soldier; in 1946 *The House at the Side of the Road*, and in 1960, after having been almost silent from 1946 until the death of Stalin, *Afar, Farther Yet*.

Tvardovski appears as the leader of the group of liberal writers, and it is true that, as editor of *Novy Mir*, he has published many works which are among the most interesting in Soviet literature; more, however, in the domain of prose than of poetry. The significance of the role Tvardovski plays in the realm of 'sympathetic' ideas expressed in *Afar, Farther Yet*, the courage of man, should not conceal from us the fact that he is, nevertheless, a very conventional and traditional poet. His *Vasili Tiorkin* is

[2] His principal book of poems is entitled *Strophes of Love*, from which the lines quoted above are taken.

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undoubtedly one of the best works of Soviet literature inspired by the war, ranking with Simonov's novel *Days and Nights of Stalingrad*, and the same author's poem, ' You remember, Aliosha, the highway to Smolensk '. But if the union of skill and emotion, if the lyrical density imposed by the sense of frightful danger then weighing upon the USSR, save *Vasili Tiorkin* from banality, the epic of peace, *Afar, Farther Yet*, labours on from worthy sentiments to generous ideas without ever rising to poetry. Tvardovski is at his ease in the classical development, in the rhetorical amplification of simple feelings. His works abound in pages that never rise above the level of this recent poem (*Novy Mir*, 1961, No. 10).

Towards the century's heroic deed,
In the name of universal happiness,
The land of the sickle and the hammer
Leads its daughters and sons.

Fatherland of peace and liberty.
What of it if enemies should threaten you?
Your peoples will always stand beside you,
Friend beside friend,
Brother beside brother.

Our might is unconquerable;
Under the red banner
It has opened new roads for the world
And points to the reaches of the stars.

Stream aloft, the banner of Lenin,
Spanning our road ahead.
Half the world is marching beneath it already,
The day will come when the whole world will march.

The May 1962 number of *Novy Mir* contains a poem by Tvardovski, ' A Word about Words ', which ends with this gnomic stanza, and it would be an error to think that the translation exaggerates its platitude:

[*the word*]
It is no ossified sound,
Nor just some raw material.
Oh, no—the word is also a deed
As Lenin oft reiterated. . . .

Tvardovski is much more important as editor of *Novy Mir* and as an essayist than as a poet. It is significant, moreover, that of all the Soviet reviews *Novy Mir* is the one that gives least space to poetry, and that the best poets of today rarely appear in it. The poets it likes best to publish are, for example, M. Aliger, Smeliakov, A. Prokofiev. *Novy Mir* is the spearhead of the struggle for the renovation of Soviet literature. This does not, however, prevent it from being attached to a rather traditional conception of poetry.

THE new generation of poets that has arisen in the last few years is represented first of all by Evgeny Evtushenko, Evgeny Vinokurov, and Andrei Voznessenski. We will centre our account of present-day

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Soviet poetry in these three names. This limitation is somewhat arbitrary: the work of other poets, such as Viktor Bokov, Bella Akhmadulina, Kharaburov, also merits attentive analysis; but within the frame of this essay it is better to enlarge in some detail upon two or three leading figures than to present a fastidious list of names accompanied by a hurried and superficial commentary.

Both Evtushenko and Voznessenski have acquired, in the imagination of the public, a symbolic value to which the critics do not fail to draw attention. Viktor Pertsov writes in his article on 'Poets of the Youth of the World': 'And here are two more fiery chargers . . . whose names occur the most frequently in the tournaments of our new poetry! Evtushenko and Voznessenski'.[3] And in a recent critical survey of 'Young Soviet Poesy' the poet Yaroslav Smeliakov remarks that 'the name of Andrei Voznessenski is almost always pronounced at the same time as that of Evgeny Evtushenko'.[4]

The works of these two poets present many differences, but in the eyes of Soviet youth they symbolise the same demand for creative freedom, the same nonconformity, the same proud, detached attitude to life, the same easy manner. The strictures addressed to both of them by the old Stalinist critics are exactly the same: they are accused of a love of rowdyism, of attracting highbrow publicity by scandalous poems or behaviour, of posing affectedly as esthetes, of falling back upon decadent mannerisms, etc. The attacks they have to put up with have, of course, a political tendency; but there is also a more practical motive, which can be indicated by two quotations: 'Indeed, what a mass of books of collected poems that no one ever looks at is now piling up on the shelves of bookshops and libraries!'[5] 'What is the explanation, then, of the obvious success of Voznessenski among the younger readers? I have seen an audience of young people acclaim him enthusiastically . . . they like to think that Voznessenski is a poet different from the others.'[6] Evtushenko and Voznessenski are read; what they write matters. How can that be accepted with a good grace by the old cart-horses who have grown grey under the harness of the Stalin and Lenin Prizes, and who now write only for catalogues and lists of contents in histories of Soviet literature?

Of the three poets we have cited, it is Voznessenski who, from every point of view, best symbolises the new generation's poetry, although he is now 34 years of age, and did not begin to get his poetry published until 1958, whereas Vinokurov and Evtushenko did, in fact, begin their careers as poets during the thaw.[7] Up to the present Voznessenski has published

[3] *Oeuvres et Opinions*, January 1962, p. 154.
[4] *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 9 December 1961.
[5] N. Koriavin, 'Why do people write poetry?' *Yunost*, No. 5, 1962, p. 72.
[6] Yaroslav Smeliakov, *loc. cit.*
[7] An anthology entitled *Poetry during the Combat* appeared in Moscow in 1959, composed of poems about the Second World War written by poets of various ages. Among others 'whose troubled youth coincided with those events' (and who wrote their first poetry at the front), it published poems by Evtushenko (who was only eleven in 1944) and Vinokurov (then nineteen, but whose first book of poems appeared

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only two collections of poems: *Mosaic* at Vladimir in 1960, and *Parabola* in Moscow in 1961. The latter work was unfortunately subjected to what Menshutin and Siniavski modestly described as ' unjustifiable corrections ' which disfigure it. As always in the USSR, it is preferable to read an author's productions when they appear first, in a review. In any case, if Voznessenski is never mentioned in the third volume of the latest *History of Soviet Literature*, it is not a case of ostracism, but of his not having yet published anything. What is significant is that Pasternak is passed over in complete silence, Akhmatova mentioned three times in passing, Evtushenko three times in passing equally rapidly, and Vinokurov, fleetingly, once.

Voznessenski himself has pointed out his most interesting contribution to Soviet poetry. At the end of 1961, a collection entitled *My Best Poem* appeared in Moscow, edited by Vinokurov, Gribachev, and Pertsov, and subtitled ' poems by Muscovite poets '. The editors had asked each Muscovite poet himself to choose what he thought was his best work. Voznessenski chose ' Parabolic Ballad ', his most criticised poem; and although he likes a scandal it would be unjust to suppose that he selected this poem for that reason. ' Parabolic Ballad ' is a short poetic manifesto, which defines only one part—externally the most important part—of Voznessenski's own poetic art. As a symbol of artistic activity, he takes Gauguin, who

To reach the royal Louvre
from Montmartre
Struck
a detour via Java and Sumatra!
He took off, forgetting the madness of money,
The cackle of wives, the stuffiness of academies.
He overcame
the earth's force of gravitation.
The sacrificial priests gaggled o'er their tankards of beer:
' The straight line is shorter, the parabola is steeper.
' Wouldn't it be better to copy the foliage of paradise? '
While he, he sped away as a roaring rocket
Through ear-ripping, coat-stripping winds,
And he entered the Louvre, not through stately portals,
But as a wrathful parabola
piercing the roof....

The poet is the man of the parabola; he must not name things, demonstrate ideas, slip lazily down the slope of logical reasoning or imitate great ancestors (' copy the foliage of paradise '), but reveal the hidden face of the stars, forget the conventional truths, suggest unaccustomed relations between beings and things, replace demonstration by oblique, approximate evocation, turn all round the object. The symbol

in 1956). The poems selected not being dated, we cannot tell when they were composed: but it is certain that Evtushenko did not begin his poetic career at eleven! And the earliest poems that Vinokurov published in his pamphlets date from 1945.

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is of no artistic value if it is transparent. What could be stupider than to enter into an art musum by the open portal that is meant for that purpose; a true artist can only enter it by breaking through the ceiling!

For Voznessenski the symbol is no mere literary trick [8]: the question is not how to represent an idea by an object which indirectly points to it, but to evoke those relations between the different aspects of reality that habit screens from us. The poet shows us reality in such a way that its diverse elements are re-combined through a *consciousness*. Here, for instance, is how Voznessenski describes a wedding breakfast:

Where they drink they break
Cups and mugs on the floor,
By the lads, underheel,
Pots are smashed to bits.
Cups explode into pieces,
Someone's happiness also
Is smashed to bits.

And you, in your transparent skimpy skirt
So young, so white,
Atremble, as a wine glass trembles
On the table's edge.

The little smile, like tiny fissures
Plays round your lips. . . .

For a country in which marriage is a sacred institution, this is a very insolent and uncalled-for picture! Indeed, the desire to overthrow all the traditional representations of reality brings Voznessenski's preoccupations rather near the experiments of the surrealists. He reminds us of these also by the way he associates, dissociates, and couples words together. His lines are caught up into an intoxication with words: he delights in alliterations which break the rhythm of the line by quickening it. Smeliakov reproaches him for railing at

The experts reeking
Of formaline and incense. . . .

simply because 'formalin' (*formol*) and 'incense' (*fimiam*) begin with the same consonant: but the objection is only partly valid: are not these essential attributes of the official criticism?—formalin in which it tries to sterilise youthful talent and the incense it burns so prodigally to the established writers? Still, it is true that Voznessenski likes playing with words, with their outward forms irrespective of the immediate content. This playfulness, however, always tends to create an atmosphere peculiar to his poetry; his juggling with words and letters is like his juggling with beings and things.

[8] As it is in the famous novel by Alexander Yashin, *The Levers*; where the battery-receiver symbolises the poverty of the kolkhoz; the woman teacher hiding herself behind her scarf during the official speech by Tsipichev symbolises the refusal of the intelligentsia to accept—at least completely—the teaching of the Party: the air made unbreathable by smoke in the secretary's office symbolises the stifling atmosphere of bureaucratic Russia, etc., etc.

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Thus, when he conjures up 'guests pot-bellied as kettles', it is because *gruznie* and *grielki* provide a fine alliteration, but also as detached and disrespectful an image as could be wished. Like Evtushenko, with less brilliance but more subtlety, Voznessenski is, in fact, a perfectly disrespectful poet; a number of critics reproach him for his 'impertinences'. Here is one of them, which shows how Voznessenski can renovate a hackneyed theme, both in meaning and form. One day he decided to write a poem on Lenin: there is no more overworked theme in all Soviet literature; the evocation of Vladimir Ilich always engenders swank, emphasis, bombast, the grandiloquent pose, tricks—everything that Lenin himself liked least: 'Lenin lived, lives, and will live forever!' as the hymn of the Komsomols proclaims. But Voznessenski entitles his poem 'Lenin's Sequoia'.[9]

In the motor-car state of California
Where the sun itself smells of colofony
There is a park of giant red-woods. . . .

One already suspects that in a poem about Lenin, the sun smells of colophane only because *kanifoliu* has a vague assonance with *Kalifornii*. Voznessenski continues:

The sheriff, the fly of his trousers undone,
Steamed up in laborious speech,
Trudged along to be received by the Mayor:
'My Mayor, the shameless rabble
'Reach out, leaf and root, for Moscow . . .
'Oooo . . .'
The Mayor swallowed his cigar. Fire! . . .

This off-hand style is combined with great conciseness of form. Voznessenski symbolises better than anyone some of the deeper tendencies of contemporary Soviet poetry: the rejection of the complacently drawn-out speech, the taste for the elliptical, for the abbreviated, for speed. We find these characteristics again in Evtushenko, in spite of his liking for eloquence, and in Vinokurov. Out of words that telescope one another the image springs naked, without comment.[10] The poet exhibits; he has no time to explain. Hence the contracted, spasmodic, flashing qualities of Voznessenski's poetry:

Fire in the Architectural!
Through halls, through blueprints,
As would an amnesty through gaols—
Spreads fire. Fire!

Upon the sleepy facade
Impudently, mischievously,
As a red-bottomed gorilla
Flares up a window! . . .

[9] *Znamya*, 1962, No. 4.

[10] This exposes Voznessenski to a good deal of criticism, like that of the poet Koriavin in the March 1961 number of *Novy Mir*, protesting that we never know the why and the how of the situations Voznessenski describes.

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Farewell, architecture!
Blaze freely on,
Cow sheds with cupids,
Rococo savings banks. . . .

Farewell, age of suburbias.
Life's a succession of smouldering ruins.
We are consumed by fire.
To live is to burn. . . .

His detachment and love of ellipsis enable Voznessenski to rediscover a virtue completely lacking in Soviet literature—humour:

And again, looping the loop.
They tear along all night long
The same old inveterate
Motorists and poets. . . .

His horror of 'hurdy-gurdy' leads him to reduce the logical structure of sentences to the minimum:

Begrimed snouts.
Camp fire.
A stream.
We are young. We are hungry
As a legion of imps. . . .

It is here that the tic, the mannerism, the mechanical repetition of methods is a danger to him. The acceleration of the rhythm, the multiplication of interjections and the abundance of exclamation marks, sometimes serve only to mask an absence of inspiration. That is what Soviet critics mean when they call Voznessenski's poetry 'shrill'. But where is the poet who has never given us the feeling that he caricatures himself? It is unfair, then, to single out lines like the following in order to reduce Voznessenski's poetry to a merely clever utilisation of methods which appear new only because Soviet readers and writers have never really assimilated the art of Mayakovski:

Wash-houses! Wash-houses! Doors slam!
Old women go jumping into the snow. . . .

Sometimes the machinery revolves in a void: that does not prevent Voznessenski from being the best spokesman for the Soviet poetry of today and tomorrow.

BORN in 1933, Evtushenko is the youngest of the three poets whose work we are briefly reviewing here. He is by far the most widely known in the West: in the USSR itself his popularity is such that he need not envy Voznessenski's. More than the latter, he is a scandaliser. Turned out of the Komsomol at 20 years of age, he has led, with great notoriety, an amorous life more or less in defiance of the strict norms of 'soviet' morals.[11] He likes taking risks, and his poetry is thoroughly

11 On several occasions, during a visit to Russia, we heard professors of the University pronounce the name of Evtushenko with horror, as that of 'a monster of immorality'.

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'engaged' upon topical affairs. Evtushenko takes sides; is pugnacious, rebellious, insolent, carnivorous; lucky not to have been born before 1933. The conservative Starikov accused him lately of a lack of 'political tact',[12] and the reproach is understandable when we read lines like these:

You drink to the shades of Verlaine,
You, with your tightly stuffed bellies.
You would assassinate all poets
In order later to recite them. . . .

or again, this passage in the famous *Baby Yar* (a poem which is not included in the latest collection of his poems, *A Gesture*):

O my Russian people!
You are really international at heart.
But the unclean
Have often loudly taken in vain
Your most pure name. . . .

As we know, the governing bureaucracy has encouraged Russian chauvinism to the limit, with its inevitable corollary, anti-semitism. We are therefore hardly surprised to read Starikov's exclamation:

> Why, then, does the management of a literary journal of our Union allow Evtushenko, at this moment, to attack Lenin's policy of nationalities, by means of associations of ideas and allusions which can only be described as acts of provocation?

To be accused of anti-Leninist provocation is no light matter in the USSR! It shows us that Evtushenko's poetry has nothing in common with 'engagement' as the literary bureaucrats understand it. The poems he writes on Cuba, on Algeria, or on communism, are poles apart from the traditional commissioned works. Evtushenko recently declared to a French journalist: 'I never write to order, and work to no plan of production'.[13] In this he is affirming an independence characteristic of the new generation of Soviet poets as a whole. We can well believe him; this is one of the elements of his immense success with the young people; they are panting for air, for frankness and sincerity, after the great Stalinist carnival of fear and falsehood. On this point *Baby Yar* is *exemplary*, and in the USSR this has been recognised by his adversaries as well as his defenders.

Evtushenko loves to insist upon the *mission*, the *vocation*, of the poet. For him, the poet has a function to discharge in society: he bears within himself a truth that he must communicate to other men; or, rather, he is the spokesman for voices that the poet alone is able to hear:

Tucked in bed I hear
The snow storm trying to say something,
And the tramways in the swish of the snow
Sadly clanging each its own tale.

[12] *Literatura i Zhizn*, 27 September 1961.
[13] Interview by K. S. Karol in *L'Express*, 24 May 1962.

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Scraps of posters attempting to whisper.
On the roofs the sheet iron attempting to shout,
And the water attempting to sing in the pipes,
And the telephone wires moaning impotently! . . .

There is cause for my vigil this night,
And to come to the help of them all
I must become, in duty and in love,
These trees, these tramways, and these men. . . .

Evtushenko sometimes defines this vocation of the poet in much more restrained and traditional terms:

I do not want to squander
My vocation upon trifles,
But that my verses be
The very colour of our flag.

Verses so strikingly red
And their light so solemnly pure
That the old and the young will say
'This is indeed a communist poet.' . . .

As it is, Evtushenko affirms that the poet must be of his time, live with his age, which means that he must renounce the traditional old rubbish so honoured in Soviet art. Such is the theme of his poem 'Rockets and Carts':

One must not despise the village cart—
It has done its work.
But sometimes something jars
When I meet it in a work of art. . . .

To fulfil his mission, the poet must always try to find means to express, with the utmost possible sincerity, what he himself sees, feels and thinks. Artifice is incompatible with poetry:

You talk too much, you think all wrong,
So rarely simple and direct.
And one is never sure of discovering
What in you is not you. . . .

'You talk too much': the demand for sincerity implies the rejection of speech-making that we have noted in Voznessenski. The taste for the abbreviated is itself closely linked with the deeper desire to penetrate and depict things and beings as concretely as possible. This double preoccupation does much to account for the enormous popularity of Hemingway's work among the young Soviet intellectuals of today. It is significant that Evtushenko should have dedicated one of his finest poems, 'Encounter' (*Yunost*, 1961, No. 4), to the author of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and that this poem is winged with an exaltation that is unusual for a poet so conscious of his means and his 'tricks' as Evtushenko:

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With stern, victorious determination
He walked
raising a tidal wave
Over all the dust of ages
that has been faked under 'modern',
Through all that quasi-antique 'modern'. . . .
The very ground beneath him seemed to give
So heavily he trod upon it. . . .
Rough hewn out of some granite crag
He walked, as one walks through bullets, through ages. . . .

Bella Akhmadulina has also dedicated to the American writer a poem, published in her latest collection of verses, *The Rope*. In a curious antithesis to Evtushenko she writes:

He walks lightfooted as an Indian,
He, who knows hunting and love.

Hemingway's dry, short sentences, his love of concrete detail either significant or merely accessory, the astonishing combination of nihilism with feeling for the depth of an existence that is felt, smelt, and tasted—all this could not fail to impress the young Soviet writers, in revolt against the traditional treadmill, against the academic lyricism and fulsomeness, the pretentious false simplicity, of the Stalin prize-winners. In Hemingway they find an example of what they want to do and of the manner in which they tend to feel their existence. Are there not, in Evtushenko, some of the heroic attitudes of Hemingway? But to accuse him of copying the American writer would be as false as to accuse Yuri Kazakov of doing the same in his short stories. Evtushenko and Kazakov are only giving artistic expression, by means similar to Hemingway's, to personal and collective urges that are wholly original.

Though it has more amplitude of compass, Evtushenko's lyricism is nevertheless more traditional than Voznessenski's, in content as well as in form. Evtushenko has too much natural eloquence not to be carried away by the very movement of his verse. He constructs his poems out of accumulations of concrete details. But he also loves oratorical effects and crashing cadences. The tone in which he declaims his poem clearly shows his taste for eloquence and sometimes for striking an attitude. Soviet critics often reproach him for 'playing the coquette'. Here, for instance, is a coquettish ending that falls flat, taken from a poem entitled 'Moscow Goods Station'.

Moscow Goods station,
I beg you to remember them. . . .
They go nights without sleep. . . .
Theirs will be glorious inventions.
On them depends the fate of the world.
But meanwhile,
for coming to their aid,
Thank you, Moscow Goods station.
Thank you, my dear. . . .

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Like Voznessenski, Evtushenko has also written a poem entitled 'Marriage', in which again we find a bride-to-be in tears:

The bride sheds bitter tears. . . .

But whereas Voznessenski points out, merely by the way, that his young bride

Has married someone—no, something,

and constructs his poem by juxtaposing a series of logically unrelated images, seen from the outside, Evtushenko lets us know that his young bride is in tears because her husband is going to the front tomorrow:

Rifle in hand he will go
Maybe to fall
Prey to a German bullet. . . .
Their first, bridal, night
Is maybe their last. . . .
The bride weeps bitterly,
The guests stand in tears. . . .

The evocation is rather banal: more than Voznessenski's, indeed, Evtushenko's poetry is dependent on *the event*; though it is too original to be mere commentary, it is more closely bound to the actual: it is therefore less given to rhythmic and verbal experimentation, and much more ready to draw upon the resources of oratorical rhetoric. Evtushenko writes trenchantly; his poetry often gives the appearance of improvisation, and in the stream of words which sweep away the poet, the good sentiments, the apparent simplicity, the easy coquetry, the reiterations, and the near-misses find their proper place. Evtushenko is not a demanding poet—he easily lets himself be carried away by the inspiration of the moment. The form of his poetry is separable from its content.

His poems sometimes recall Victor Hugo in their oratorical tone and method—in the method, for instance, of accumulations and repetition to accentuate the line. The resemblance to Victor Hugo is not accidental. In some respects Evtushenko does remind us of the young leader of the French romantics; he has the same brio, the same oratory and love of eloquence, the same facility, and, what is more important, the same affirmation of self. Evtushenko has, indeed, written a number of rather complacent love poems . . . but they are incomparably more full-blooded than the triflings of Olga Bergoltz or Shchipachev. This affirmation of *self* in lyric poetry makes itself felt at the moment when Soviet literature is emerging from a pseudo-classical period which has points in common with the Napoleonic pseudo-classicism. To try to establish any close comparison between these two periods of world literature would be grotesque, no doubt. But is it not true that Soviet poetry is now taking on several characteristics that resemble those of the European romantic movement: self-affirmation, poems of a biographical character, love of eloquence, the appeal to creative enthusiasm, the development of the love lyric? [14] Of all these qualities Evtushenko is the best incarnation.

[14] Evtushenko's ideas upon the poet's mission also recall those of Hugo; but these are ideas common enough in Russian literature of the nineteenth century.

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BORN in 1925 at Bryansk, Evgeny Vinokurov began to write in 1945, but his first booklet of verse, *Poems on Military Service*, was not published until 1956, and was quickly followed by *Blue Sky*. In February 1962, a volume appeared in Moscow entitled *Lyric Poetry*, which contained all his previous booklets of poetry—the two already mentioned, together with *Confessions*, *The Human Face*, and *The Word*; the last of which, a collection of the poems that Vinokurov wrote in 1961, was published separately at the same time. The whole of his work is available in one book of 312 pages,[15] and that of Voznessenski in two booklets. In the first poem of his latest collection, *The Word*, Vinokurov writes:

The sacred teaching says—
To speak the word, to build a phrase,
How simple: open but the mouth
And, lo, the miracle of words. . . .

These lines by an old pupil of the Gorki Literary Institute, which recall dadaist and surrealist affirmations about the primary importance of spontaneous verbal utterance, stand in complete contradiction to the esthetic of socialist-realism. According to the official ideology of art, the word could never be a spontaneous miracle; it could be of no value except in function with the ends aimed at by whoever employs it.

Vinokurov goes further still:

I know that men consist of words
Which have entered them,
and of a body.
The word moves. Earth is on fire!
And the pitchfork transfixes the sky. . . .

Thus, the word is the final reality: it is all-powerful, it keeps the world going. Vinokurov, a poet, vehemently affirms the magic power of the *word*—of the word as the poet uses it, whatever it may be, not of certain specific words intended to project the history of tomorrow upon the poetry of today. He can also write, later on:

Deep feelings rest on silence.
Suffering is mute. And so is music. . . .

Here he is not contradicting what he said before, which was an expression of an idea common to all the new poets enjoying their ability to explore the abysses of the word without restraint or guidance from the ukases of the Politbureau. In the last two lines Vinokurov is simply condemning garrulity and hurdy-gurdy. As he says:

Then there are words—the eye skips over them.
Bean pods that are barren. That hold no beans. . . .

So that his words should not be empty, Vinokurov makes them waltz and spin: he, too, wants to give vibrant rhythm to his poem:

[15] All references, unless otherwise stated, will be to this volume.

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Third gear! Indeed!
Why crawl? One must tear along! Speed along!
That the very heart stand still
Inside my speeding frame!
That around me, like smoke,
Drift colours. Whiter—white.
That my breath rear up
As a shying horse!
Beat the windscreen, wind!
Beat it! To shivers, to spasms!
Howl, motor! Not motor, but TNT.
Third gear!
Much too timidly
Did I tread the earth until now. . . .[16]

Voznessenski gives hardly any importance to the subject of the poem: the theme he chooses is first of all a pretext for ascending and descending the gamut of his verbal virtuosity. His poetry is not a mere game, but on the loose warp of the theme the lines are woven haphazard. Evtushenko, more classical, either tells a story (love poems), treats a subject, or affirms an idea (political poems). Vinokurov seems even more traditional; each of his collections is composed of poems written upon a common, general theme: *Poems on Military Service* evokes, as the title indicates, scenes of military life, the central piece of the booklet being a series of short poems grouped under the title 'Barracks'. *Blue Sky* is made up of little nature pictures and of brief sketches (The Swans; Springtime; Labour). *Confessions*, a more personal selection, includes love poems and some recollections of childhood and youth—the favourite theme of young Soviet poets. *The Human Face* and *The Word* are more various; here, the different veins of Vinokurov's supple talent mingle together in poems expressive of the writer's need to meditate upon the value of his art.

Vinokurov pays much less attention than Voznessenski to experiments with form; from time to time, it is true, he finds good alliterations:

Grust po tebe menya sevodnya glozhet
I ya grustyu, i v etom net grekha.
(*To-day I'm gnawed by a longing for you.*
And I long. And I see no sin in this.)

But these phonetic preoccupations are of secondary importance to him; he is interested above all in *rapidity of rhythm* and exactitude of *concrete detail*. He excels in the evocation of an object, a moment, a memory, a person, in a few words: he does not allow the evocation to extend into description or dissertation; he does not develop it. Like Voznessenski, he leaves part of his poem to the reader's guesswork. Thus, his poem 'Adolescence' is made up of a series of details thrown together without much logical connection:

[16] *The Word*, p. 3. The poem of the same name in the collected *Lyric Poems*, which is also the first in the booklet *The Word*, presents quite a different text.

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Youth is that age
When you fancy that the world
Is only a fancy.
When reality resembles
A shimmering landscape
Reflected in some pond outside Moscow.
The reality seems built of matchsticks—
Blow on it and it all falls apart.
Youth is the moment
When the distance from the heart
To humanity is the shortest. . . .

No detail follows from the previous one as an amplification of it, as in a poem by Hugo—or by Evtushenko; it is simply added to it: that is why Vinokurov sometimes gives the impression that he is slightly out of breath. It is a method which, in the same piece, mixes such commonplace images as:

Youth is that age
When you walk as a recently
Hatched chick
Who hasn't yet shaken off
The shell bits of his infancy. . . .

with fine, new images:

Youth resembles that
Indefinite, transient hour
When blue twilight
Like water
Fills the lanes of Arbat. . . .

Vinokurov's qualities are less striking than those of Voznessenski and Evtushenko; his words are less exalted, there is less brio and glitter; he has neither Voznessenski's mastery of words nor the eloquence and lyrical elevation of Evtushenko. He nevertheless occupies an important place in contemporary Soviet poetry. Like Evtushenko, with less noise but certainly with more penetration and sensibility, he helped to restore a personal quality to lyric poetry, and to bring the 'I' back into poetry.

BESIDES their individual qualities, the works of Voznessenski, Evtushenko, and Vinokurov present certain common characteristics that we find in other poets.

The young Soviet poets are suspicious of rhetoric, of long speeches, of lofty fluency: as in architecture, this is no time for the gigantic. Addicted to concrete, precise detail, to real things and beings, these young poets are in general writers of short pieces; they outline their themes but do not elaborate them into vast frescoes. To recite names would be superfluous; one has only to open a book of their poetry or no matter which of the reviews, to see their rapid sketches and little pictorial pieces.

Turning away from the mechanical orchestration of the great social themes, these poets are giving more attention than before to the problems

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of form. V. Soloukhin has written several collections of blank verse: they all love playing with words, multiplying alliterations and assonances. From this point of view we must mention Viktor Bokov. Bokov is the great friend of Voznessenski who, in his *Mosaic*, addressed an affectionate poem to him:

He goes about—blue-eyed
His eyes darting like perches,
Or a window open to the spring . . .
As unpredictable as the cast of a die,
Breezy as March. . . .

Bokov, moreover, responded to this homage in his volume *Victor's Springtime*, published a few months after *Mosaic*, with a poem which the critic Cherniakov rightly described as 'arcadian' in tone: [17]

My darling Andrew! Piper of the cities!
Caressing my ears with your verses,
Like love itself you make me young again.
Oh, how I love you. You, my early leaf-bud
With its translucent veins! . . .
. . . the silvery little voice
Whose every note is so pure. . . .

If Voznessenski pays homage to the work of Viktor Bokov, it is because the two men are very much alike; they share in the exalted tension of the short and dry phrase, in the contempt for outward logical connections, in the staccato rhythm, in their predilection for tricks and games of sounds, in their sense of humour. Entire poems by Bokov are explainable only by the poet's desire to string together words, quite unpredictable in combination, apparently because they echo one another:

Otymi solovya ot zarosley,
Ot rodnovo ruchya s rodnikom.

(Part the nightingale from the thickets,
From its brook, and its source.)

These games are not necessarily gratuitous: for instance, the critical humour in this line is very effective (*Yunost*, 1961, No. 4):

Breathe in the lily-of-the-valley, not incense. . . .
(Ne na ladan, na landysh dyshite.)

Bokov is of a more adaptable genius than Voznessenski; he readily delights in sparkling trifles (*Yunost*, 1961, No. 7):

Eyebrows up to the sky.
Plaits down to the waist.
She is the girl
We met in Tallin. . . .

My name has flown
To me from the sea.
Ocean winds brought it
Into my cradle. . . .

[17] *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 12 May 1962.

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He likes to place his poems, generally very short, in a purely imaginary setting:

The maiden—a cellophane wrapped egret,
Getting soaked at a tramway stop.
Importuned by the thin, thin drizzle. . . .
Steel-clad Don Quixotes hasten to her side. . . .[18]

But whatever style he is cultivating (fantasy, trifles, or political poems), Bokov, like his colleagues, has a very high opinion of the value of the poetic activity; which is not the least typical characteristic of this generation:

When I write I hold in the palm of my hand
A light sphere—the terrestrial globe. . . .[19]

One must also mention Boris Slutski, Yuri Pankratov, Kharabarov, Poperechny, and, especially, Bella Akhmadulina (former wife of Evtushenko), who has just published her first collection of verse, *The Rope*, which includes the poems written since 1956.

Akhmadulina's themes are the same as those of other poets of her generation—the nature ('April', 'August', 'September', 'December', 'A winter day', 'Flowers') and specifically the distant lands of the USSR (parts of her verse are grouped under the title 'From a virgin land notebook' and 'From a Siberian notebook'), poems of love, poems of objects of modern life ('The automatic camera', 'The motorcycle'). She adopts an elliptical language, both concise and unexpected:

I'm changing gears
In face of the moon and the wind . . .

Life is good—as an elephant . . .

The hand was breaking
Against the high piano keys.
Over it, as in churchyards,
The grass grows deep . . .

She delights, to excess, in rhymes so rich as to become almost puns:

Mne nevterpekh, mne nevterpekh.
Mne ne v Tergekh? Mne ne v Tergekh?

(I can't bear the delay, can't bear the delay.
Is it Tergekh I'm going to? Is it Tergekh?)

She loves surprising juxtapositions of words, which becomes almost a mannerism:

In going red she turned blue
(Ona sinela do krasna)

One mustn't weep, but swim.
(Ne nado plakat, nado plavat)

a verse which is based on an assonance of doubtful poetical value.

[18] *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 1 May 1961.
[19] *Yunost*, 1961, No. 7.

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Her love poems are quite conventional. The best do not rise above these lines, the end of a poem whose only vigour is due to alliteration:

'Tis not in pride—'tis in sorrow
That I bear my head so high. . . .

(*Ya ne iz gordosti—iz goresti*
Tak pryamo golovu derzhu)

Akhmadulina has written very little these last few years. No more than that of her young contemporaries can her poetry develop except by reaching above the level of elegant, or even brilliant, commentary on subjects, which are bound to appear to us rather insipid and light.

IT is precisely this self-confidence that annoys the Soviet critics, even some who cannot be counted among the conservatives, such as Menshutin and Siniavski, who write:

> Not long ago the 'young' were quiet, modest and respectful. . . . With the exception, perhaps, of Evtushenko alone, the 'beginners' tried not to talk at the top of their voices about their private lives. And now, every poet is uttering pretentious declarations and rowdy manifestos! The poets have become loud-mouthed, quarrelsome and impatient.[20]

What Smeliakov likes—though he too cannot be ranged among the out-and-out conservatives—are the young poets who sensibly acknowledge, like Vladimir Kostrov, that:

> *You, who became my superiors.*
> *You, of pure eye and of blazing youth,*
> *My elders, bearing experience and knowledge,*
> *I believe in you*
> *And it is from you that I learn how to live. . . .*

If it is not the Kostrovs but the Voznessenskis who get the limelight, the sole reason, according to Smeliakov, is that the latter organise their propaganda better. He explains why he does not much like these rowdy innovators, by attacking, though without naming it, the 'Parabolic Ballad' of Voznessenski:

> For example, I do not like the parabola, I like the straight line; I like poets who cut it short: I like the word to sound clear and firm. I do not like allusions, I like slogans—of course, bold (?), imaginative (?) and talented (??) slogans.

If the new generation provoke this reaction among the moderates, one can imagine what sentiments they must arouse in the Stalinists. During the appearance in *Yunost* of the novel *The Starred Letter*, Sobolev surpassed himself in lamentations over the misguidance of youth. But they have to be prudent: Alexis Surkov could not hope to have such an effect today as he had in 1954—the dismissal of Tvardovski and Panferov from their posts as editors-in-chief of *Novy Mir* and *Oktyabr*, after public

[20] *Novy Mir*, No. 1, 1961, p. 288.

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denunciation. Recently, a young poet, Robert Rozhdestvenski, got *Literaturnaia Gazeta* to publish a very violent little note in reply to a poem by Anatol Kalinin, printed in *Literatura i Zhizn*, which had attacked a poem of Evtushenko's that Rozhdestvenski, moreover, thought was a bad one! So we can see that times have changed somewhat.

The ultra-Stalinists therefore have recourse—preferably—to allusions, and this represents a considerable set-back for them since the Pasternak affair, which for the ultras was a Pyrrhic victory. The way in which Kochetov writes in his last novel, *The Obkom Secretary*, may be regarded as a model of the methods used by the conservatives to ridicule and depreciate the new Soviet poetry. *The Obkom Secretary* presents some fifteen characters, of whom only one (such is progress!) is fundamentally negative and remains so to the end—the modernist poet Ptushkov. Even the woman of no reputation, Yuria Pavlovna, comes to a good end, by marrying into the Party; but Ptushkov does nothing but reveal his meanness and maleficence: he is pretentious and stupid; he is an idler who knows how to do nothing but to break hearts, without loving anyone. But let him be confronted by a true Soviet woman and he crumples up like a punctured balloon. His new poetry is nothing but a half-baked mixture of decadent devices that were fashionable in Russia *before* the Revolution. Not only is he stupid, pretentious, and a nobody, he is also cowardly and vicious: the only comprehensible poem he writes is a satire, 'The boyar Vassili Dexter and his faithful following', in which he ignobly defames the Obkom secretary, Vasili Denissov, and his friends, who are devoting every minute of their lives to the Party and the country. The sole reason—suggested though not explicitly stated—why Ptushkov does this, is evidently his rancour at not having been able to go to bed with the Obkom secretary's sister-in-law! And despite all this, Ptushkov, evidently intended as a portrayal of Evtushenko, still remains at liberty to write.

For all its virulence, this diatribe by Kochetov is weakened by two circumstances. First, poets who write poems of the sort that Kochetov likes remain on the shelves of the bookshops, whilst the productions that he pillories are all the rage among the young people. And second, the reception given to Kochetov's theses in literary circles was such that the party did not even nominate him for election to the board of the Union of Writers at the meeting in Moscow in April 1962.

In the realm of Soviet poetry, then, socialist-realism is now in rags and tatters, although not a single poet has explained that he wanted it to be so. The dogma is not denied, nor discussed. It is forgotten.

In fact, during the last few years Soviet poetry has gained the right to exist. That is how the weaknesses and the pliancies that we can discover among the best poets of the new generation are to be understood. Will Soviet poetry hold on to the positions it has won? Will it advance further? Contrary to what one would have thought only four years ago, the answer no longer depends exclusively upon political conditions, but primarily upon the Soviet poets themselves.

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Today two 'schools', without official tags, are openly opposed on the Soviet artistic scene. Of course the 'liberals' do not claim any coherent artistic principles different from 'social-realism' which could define the 'credo' of a new literary school. The present situation, however, logically leads towards the emergence of literary schools, and these would deepen the divergences which already exist between all those who have come together today only to affirm their right to write more or less what they want.

The fact that a young Soviet poet, Leonid Pashchenko, claims affinity with Mayakovski, Blok, and Khlebnikov, underlines this desire to take up the thread of tradition interrupted by thirty years of Stalinism. It may be rash to suppose that the leadership of the CPSU wishes to return to the policy defined by the famous Central Committee resolution of 1925, inspired by Trotsky, Bukharin, and Lunacharsky. The Soviet leaders cannot yet officially accept artistic polycentrism in the USSR, but their search for a new policy capable of bridging the abyss between the hypertrophied party apparatus and the passive masses would certainly dissuade them from abandoning (except in case of some serious danger) a policy which leads, more or less gradually, towards the restoration of the 1925 policy. For the new generation of Soviet poets, this is both their opportunity and their responsibility. It also set limits to their horizon.

ANNOUNCING THE FEBRUARY 1963 ISSUE OF THE

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Published Quarterly by the

Southern Political Science Association,

Peabody Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, U.S.A.

Subscription and Membership Fee: $5.00 U.S.A.; $5.50 Foreign; $3.00 Student

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THE REPERTORY OF THE FIFTIES

Francois de Liencourt

'IN a communist organisation of society the subordination of the artist to local and national narrow-mindedness—a subordination which results simply from the division of labour—in any case disappears. In such a society the subordination of the individual to his specific art also vanishes—a subordination which made him exclusively a painter, a sculptor, etc., and which by its very name sufficiently expresses the narrow limits of his economic development and his dependence on the division of labour. In a communist society there are no painters but, at most, people who, among other things, paint.'[1] Thus Karl Marx.

If we apply this idea to Soviet playwrights, we should first note that the CPSU does not claim that a communist society has already been established in the USSR, and that Marx's opinion is irrelevant for art in a 'socialist' society, whether we consider Stalin's period or the years since. In both cases, at the apex of Zhdanovism as well as during the best periods of the post-Stalin thaw, the Soviet theatre has not put an end to 'the subordination of the artist to local and national narrow-mindedness'; it has been and still is marked by many essentially national characteristics.

If we consider the second part of the quotation, i.e. the prophecy according to which in a communist society there will no longer be painters, but at the most 'people who, among other things, paint', then the Soviet playwrights are often not so very far from Marx's idea. If we apply it to Stalin's time, there would be much to support the definition that there were no longer Russian dramatic authors, but at the most men who, among other things, wrote plays. It would be closer to the truth to say that the playwrights were not so much men who, among other things, wrote for the theatre, but rather that they were 'engineers of the human soul', very often political journalists, who, with due obedience, did, among other things, write plays. The quality of the Stalinist repertoire was not high, as Soviet critics today admit quite openly. Nowadays, in spite of the move towards the 'construction of communism', we note a step towards a better division of labour. There are more professional playwrights who come from the theatre and not from the party press, more Soviet authors who are first and foremost intellectuals and writers.

The changes can be established by comparing two periods: the high tide of Stalin's rule (that is mainly the 1946–52 period), and the years 1954–61 when, in spite of some zigzagging in the party line, the theatre benefited from a 'thaw' to an extent which did not exclude the possibility

[1] Karl Marx, *Die Deutsche Ideologie*, *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*. Erste Abteilung. Band 5, p. 373. Berlin, 1932.

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of creating really good plays. As an attempt to measure the changes which occurred in the character of Soviet dramatic production, in the repertory of the theatres, and in the situation of the playwright, and at the risk of being schematic, I should like briefly to consider three items:

(a) the changes in the policy of the Soviet authorities on controls of dramatic art and in the organisation of the theatre,
(b) the changes in the *content* of the repertoire, content (*soderzhanie*) being understood mainly in political, moral, and sociological terms,
(c) the changes in the esthetic, literary, and dramatic quality of the repertoire.

The Soviet theatrical repertoire might be compared to a cart pulled by three horses, the first horse being the regime, the second the theatre-goer, and the third the tastes and desires of the professionals—writers, actors, producers, and directors. This third horse was very strong and restive in the first years of the Soviet regime, was broken in and tamed under Stalin, and is now starting a new life. The first two horses often pull in opposite directions.

THE first attempts of the party to take the theatre completely into its own hands can be traced back to 1927. In order to fight the 'bourgeois influence' which had flourished under NEP, a meeting convened by the central committee agitprop department decided to reinforce party control over the theatre by appointing communists as directors, by establishing 'artistic councils' within the theatres, and by emphasising the role of 'activist' groups (party, komsomol and trade unions) in order to wage a 'civil war in the theatre' and to put an end to the kind of 'spiritual NEP' which had developed in the twenties.

In 1929 a committee to deal with the theatre repertoire was set up in the People's Commissariat for Education; this *Glavrepertkom* was a department of the newly-established *Glaviskusstvo*, the section of the commissariat dealing with art and literature. Stalin's stranglehold on literature became tighter after 1932, with the dissolution of RAPP, and even more after 1934 with the foundation of the Union of Soviet Writers. In the name of 'socialist realism', as defined by Zhdanov at the 1934 congress of Soviet writers, more than half of the new plays or dramatic productions presented during the 1936–37 season by the main theatres of the Soviet Union were forbidden by *Glavrepertkom*.[2] In 1936 control was transferred from the commissariat to the newly-founded Committee for Art Affairs.

At the same time, many organisational measures were taken against the theatres accused of 'formalism'. In February 1936 Studio D of the Moscow Arts Theatre, run by Michael Chekhov, was closed, and in September the Leningrad Theatre of Young Workers (TRAM) was also suppressed. The Committee for Art Affairs decided to 'merge' theatre

[2] B. A. Nazarov and O. V. Gridneva, 'On the backwardness of drama and the theatre', *Voprosy Filosofii*, 5, 1955, pp. 85–94.

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troupes which had nothing in common with each other; the Kamerny Theatre of Tairov for instance, famous for its intimate and refined symbolism and its neo-classic stylisation, was amalgamated with the Realistic Theatre of N. Okhlopkov, a disciple (at that time) of Meyerhold.[3]

Nor did physical terror spare the theatre. Its most famous victim was Meyerhold. His theatre was closed in January 1938 after a violent attack in *Pravda* by Kerzhentsev, then chairman of the Committee for Art Affairs,[4] who reviled the theatre as 'alien' and accused the famous producer of having staged plays by 'enemies of the people' such as Tretyakov and Erdman, playwrights who were taxed with 'slandering Soviet reality'. Meyerhold was arrested and died in prison or in a camp in 1941. Playwrights like Erdman and Tretyakov met the same fate; even Kirshon, a rather pro-Stalinist author, was arrested after having been denounced in the *Literary Gazette* [5] for having 'worked with Trotskyists' by his colleague and rival, V. Vishnievsky, the author of *The Optimistic Tragedy*, then starting on his career of sycophantic and fulsome praise of Stalin.[6]

This despotic and arbitrary rule was softened by the outbreak of war, when the theatre recovered some measure of freedom, and it became possible for good writers such as Leonov and Paustovsky to write plays and have them staged. This relaxation of control was part of the effort of the Soviet leaders to enlist the support of all loyal citizens, an effort which entailed concessions not only to the peasants and churchgoers but also to the intelligentsia. Because of the alliance with the West, many theatres included British, American, and French contemporary plays in their repertoire. The tendency to seek in the theatre some escape from the grim realities of war encouraged the staging of light and amusing plays, Soviet or foreign, although patriotic drama got a good showing.

ONCE the war was over, there was a reaction in all fields to ensure the purity of communist ideology against alien influences. The *Zhdanovshchina* opened in the summer of 1946 with three decrees, of which the second dealt specifically with 'the repertoire of dramatic theatres'. The decree stiffened the regulations already in force and the powers of *Glavrepertkom*, and added the stipulation that theatres were obliged to stage annually 'at least two new spectacles of high ideological and artistic quality on Soviet contemporary themes'. The structure of the theatres was also reorganised. Up to 1946 the director, the administrative chief of the theatre, was also charged with political responsibility; the artistic manager (*khudozhestvenny rukovoditel*) was his subordinate. This was not enough for Stalin and Zhdanov. A third

[3] A. Sverdlin, 'In search of a new path', *Teatr*, 10, 1956.
[4] Kerzhentsev, 'An Alien Theatre', *Pravda*, 17 December 1937.
[5] V. Vishnievsky, 'A reply is needed', *L.G.*, 26 April 1937 (quoted by E. J. Brown, *The Proletarian Episode in Soviet Literature* (New York, 1953)).
[6] After the war Vishnievsky wrote one of the most Stalinist plays of the Soviet repertoire, *Nezabyvaemy 1919*, in which the history of the fight against Yudenich near Petrograd was rewritten. *Sovetskaya Dramaturgiya 1949* (Moscow, 1950).

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man was brought in, the 'deputy artistic manager in charge of literature', the *Zavlit*, to take charge of the repertoire. In 1949, the functions of the artistic manager came to an end. He was replaced by the *Glavny Rezhissor*, explicitly subordinate to the director, usually a political boss with little or no knowledge of the theatre.[7] At the same time Stalin decided to spend less money on the theatre. Many theatres were closed. The total number of theatres in the Soviet Union, a little over 960 in 1941, fell to about 500,[9] the victims being mostly the non-Russian theatres. From 1941–53 their number was reduced by half, and from 1948 subsidies were cut; theatres had to be self-supporting.[10]

The situation of the theatre managers had never been so difficult. They were not allowed to choose their repertoire, which had to be planned and approved by *Glavrepertkom*; they were supposed to stage at least two new contemporary plays of high ideological (and, supposedly, also artistic) quality every year; they were also obliged, in the same way as the factory managers, to fulfil their financial plan without subsidies according to the rules of *khozraschot*—a difficult task if they could not satisfy the consumer, i.e. the theatre-goer! This seemed to be the case more often than not, although the average theatre-goer was not too fastidious.

That a reaction had begun to set in even before Stalin's death is shown by an article in *Pravda*, published at the end of 1952; three journalists united their efforts in writing it.[11] They questioned the value of centralised planning by the Committee on Art Affairs; the result of the state-commissioned repertoire had been a squandering of state funds, and at the same time a weakening of the sense of responsibility of theatre directors, who often took refuge in classical drama and declared that it was not their fault if they had no decent contemporary plays to stage.

After Stalin's death, the Committee on Art Affairs disappeared, its duties being transferred to a department of the newly founded Ministry of Culture, the 'Chief Administration for Art Affairs'. During the first year of the new 'collective leadership' the trend was towards relaxation of controls; after setbacks in 1954–55, the trend was continued, especially after the 1956 CPSU congress. This was of course followed by a fresh reaction after the October-November events in Poland and Hungary, but on the whole the movement towards greater freedom (or less standardisation) for the theatres and playwrights has persisted and has achieved limited but noteworthy results.

THE first improvement made for decentralisation. More responsibility was given to the theatre directors; members of the Union of Soviet Writers were allowed to submit their plays *directly* to the theatres, and

[7] Cf. the debate on 'Directors and Rezhissory' in *Teatr*, 2, 1957.
[9] Cf. *Kulturnoe Stroitelstvo SSSR* (Moscow, 1956), p. 293.
[10] T. I. Gayan, 'Against the Spirit of Parade', *Teatr*, 1, 1954; E. Botvennikov, 'For a Theatre of Unanimous People', *Teatr*, 2, 1954.
[11] V. Zaleski, V. Kuznetsov, V. Mlekhin, 'Do away with Bureaucratic Obstacles to the Development of the Theatre', *Moskovskaya Pravda*, quoted by *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. 18, p. 21.

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could also send them to the publishing houses and to the editorial boards of the literary periodicals. Of course the plays were still subject to rewriting, but the job was done in the theatres and not in the centralised repertoire committee. At the Ministry of Culture plays were now examined after they had been accepted by the theatres (actually by the *zavlit*) or published in periodicals. Once plays had been approved by the Ministry, they could be ' recommended as good to be played everywhere '.

These reforms were not welcomed by the conservative elements, nor were they considered sufficient by genuine playwrights.

In 1955 the Deputy Minister of Culture, V. Kemenov, one of Zhdanov's lieutenants, complained that the theatres had misused their newly-acquired autonomy concerning the choice of the repertoire and that most plays were of a low ideological and artistic level; the *glavrezh* should be considered the ' ideologist ' of the theatre, and should use a veto when necessary: he bore full responsibility for the plays which were produced.[12]

On the other hand Aleksander Kron, in his ' Notes of a Writer ', published in *Literaturnaya Moskva*,[13] disclosed that in all contracts between a theatre and a playwright a provision was included in which the author undertook to accept any modification or correction required by the director of the theatre; the playwright was not allowed to withdraw his work if he disagreed with the theatrical direction. Any campaign (as for instance agains alcoholism) was a pretext for imposing changes even in plays already being performed; the texts, even those which were only duplicated, were edited by *redaktors*, whose names were always given beside that of the author. ' It seems that for every book there is an officer and a political commissar. Numberless " instructors " and inspectors were accustomed to give orders in a decisive manner as if they were preceptors or watchmen '. In 1956 the right of the theatres to choose, in the conditions described by Kron, their own repertory was limited to classical drama.

In the same year, the practice of state-commissioned drama was officially condemned by a *prikaz* of the Ministry of Culture, and a further *prikaz* assigned funds to the theatres for payments to playwrights, on the responsibility of the *glavrezh*; the rates fixed were quite high (up to 15,000 rubles).[14] The only information to be found on playwrights' fees before that date is that they were in proportion to the number of acts: a drama in four acts paid 33 per cent more than one in three acts.[15] The theatres were given greater autonomy, and the artistic councils (*khudozhestvennye sovety*) created in 1955 became partly elective in 1956, but their role remained consultative and in spite of the presence of the *glavrezh* the director remained the real chief.[16]

12 The IX Congress of the All-Union Theatrical Society, *Teatr*, 1955.
13 *Literaturnaya Moskva* (Moscow, 1956), p. 789.
14 *Teatr*, 1956, Nos. 4 and 5.
15 E. Kholodov, ' The Last Act ', *Teatr*, 1, 1955.
16 ' Prikaz of the Ministry of Culture ', *Teatr*, 6, 1955; M. Lyachenko, ' Rights and Duties ', *Teatr*, 2, 1957.

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In 1956–57 the problem of director versus *glavrezh* was openly discussed. It was disclosed that many directors were utterly incompetent; many of them had been chosen from 'among party or government officials who had been a failure at their job', or among actors who had been active in local party committees.[17]

The function of director was not abolished, but the Ministry of Culture undertook to choose more competent people. It is clear from the press, however, that up to now directors are mainly concerned with two problems: how to satisfy the political authorities, and how to fulfil their financial plan. The result is often a compromise between the tastes of the theatre-goer and the requirements of the party authorities. To pretend that the two are always in conflict would be an over-simplification, especially at a time when the tasks assigned to the playwright are less exacting than formerly; nor are all theatre directors incompetent *apparatchiki* with no personal opinions. Political interference has not disappeared; it is now more decentralised, but the system is still burdensome and complicated. This provides the background for an examination of the changes which have occurred in the repertoire since Stalin's time.

TO measure these changes the starting point must be Zhdanov's speeches and the central committee's decrees in 1946; then the current Soviet repertoire can be judged by the standards they established.

The 1946–48 *Zhdanovshchina* was the culmination of party attitudes towards literature and art which had their beginnings in the thirties under the name of socialist realism. Socialist realism, as defined by Zhdanov in 1934 at the first Congress of Writers, can be briefly summarised: The word realism was not opposed to romanticism. (Gorky was then praising revolutionary romanticism.) By emphasising the concept of realism, Stalin and Zhdanov were making clear their hostility to any kind of 'modern' art, to all that was arbitrarily vilified under the name of 'formalism'. But the first word in the term was more important. In Zhdanov's own words, literature and art had to be 'tendentious'. Writers were invited to show 'reality . . . in its revolutionary development'. One of their tasks was to promote 'the ideological transformation and education [of the public] in the spirit of socialism'. Sholokhov remarked a few years ago that he never understood what was meant by socialist realism; we shall not be very wide of the mark if we define socialist realism as above all subservience to the party line by the 'engineers of the human soul'.

The main points in Zhdanov's 1946 decrees on the theatre repertoire related to Western 'bourgeois' plays and to the Soviet repertoire. Zhdanov not only condemned contemporary Western playwrights like Somerset Maugham, who had become very popular during the war; he also rejected nineteenth-century Western plays as serving the interests of 'bourgeois culture'. They distracted the public from the political struggle

[17] G. Georgievsky, 'How I became a theatre director', *Teatr*, 1, 1957.

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by concentrating their attention on plays whose heroes were 'gangsters and music-hall girls', and by 'praising adultery and the exploits of all kinds of adventurers'. As to the Soviet repertoire, it had to be purged of all plays reflecting the author's concern to remain aloof from politics. There were far too many light dramas, and authors who claimed that the time had come to stage amusing plays were rebuked. Too much attention was paid to 'so-called psychological' problems, which were devoid of all interest. On the other hand, there had been too many historical plays idealising the past. Playwrights were urged to help raise the standard of political education of the young by writing optimistic works designed to inculcate a spirit of courage, devotion to the fatherland, and faith in the victory of communism.

The appeal to portray 'positive heroes' was reinforced by a stern condemnation of 'crude satire'. Zoshchenko, two of whose plays had been staged in Leningrad, was the main target of Zhdanov's attack. But many playwrights were accused of presenting 'caricatures', 'monstrous' portraits of Soviet citizens, and of choosing too many 'negative' heroes. In the same spirit, Zhdanov's decree on the cinema rebuked the author of a film on the reconstruction of the Donbas for portraying workers who lived in filthy, decayed hovels.

Zhdanov had invited the critics to be bolder in their support of 'the party spirit' in the theatre. After his death (August 1948) the drama critics themselves were taken to task. A 'certain group of anti-patriotic drama critics' was attacked by *Pravda* (28 January 1949); they were accused of 'having lately given refuge to a nest of bourgeois esthetes, camouflaging their anti-patriotic, cosmopolitan, and rotten attitude towards Soviet art'. This monopolistic group, working mainly in the journals *Teatr* and *Sovetskoe Iskusstvo* had, among other sins, made frivolous references to such works as *Daleko ot Stalingrada* (Far from Stalingrad) by Anatoli Surov, *Pobediteli* (The Victors) by Chirskov, and *Moskovski Kharakter* (The Moscow Character) by Sofronov. The critic Gurvich, who had dared to praise Pogodin and to speak of his 'easy-going humour', in which the Russian spectator could see himself reflected, was accused of levelling 'a hateful accusation at Soviet man, to whom "easy-going" humour was deeply alien'. The 'perfidious and slanderous attacks' of this group were aimed mainly at Stalin prizewinners, and often took the form of silence. 'The method of silence, as Comrade Stalin has rightly stated, was . . . a form of criticism, a stupid and absurd one, but still a form of criticism'. The most urgent task of party critics was to deliver a crushing ideological blow to this anti-patriotic group. This 'crushing blow', which was not only ideological, heightened the effects of Zhdanovism. How could playwrights simultaneously implement party slogans and satisfy the theatregoer? Many theatres resorted to the classical Russian repertoire; up to 1953 Alexander Ostrovsky was the most popular playwright. Virta, one of the 'accepted' playwrights, recipient of a Stalin prize, advanced the idea that since negative characters were no longer typical, the only

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conflicts it was possible to represent on the stage were those between the 'good' and the 'better'.

This idea, known as *teoria bezkonfliktnosty*, served the party as a pretext to blame the critics for the failure of its own policy. The shift was marked by a *Pravda* editorial of 7 April 1952, which accused the anti-patriotic drama critics of having launched the pernicious theory of 'bezkonfliktnost', and urged playwrights to resort to satire. At the 19th CPSU congress in October 1952 Malenkov said that 'The Soviet people . . . will not tolerate dullness, art that has no message, and falsity. . . . Our remarkable authors must scourge the faults, defects, and sores still to be found in our society. . . . We need Soviet Gogols and Shchedrins who, with the fire of their satire, will burn away everything that is undesirable, rotten, and moribund, everything that retards our progress.'

The invitation to resort to satire was quickly heeded by the playwrights. Sergei Mikhalkov, an author specialising in children's literature, who during the war had written the highly patriotic words of the new Soviet national anthem, had followed the Zhdanov party line in his extreme 'anti-cosmopolitan' plays. For instance, *Ya khochu domoi* (I want to go home), published in 1949, described the efforts of 'British imperialists' and 'Latvian traitors' to prevent a young Soviet child, Sasha Butuzov, from escaping from a DP camp in Germany. The Soviet authorities help Sasha to flee the imperialist yoke, and start a new life in the Soviet Union. When all is ready for him to fly to Moscow, the Soviet Captain Peskaev asks him: 'Do you want to go to Moscow?'

Sasha: I want to go home.
Peskaev: You will soon be home.
Sasha: (Looking at Comrade Stalin's picture) Stalin!
Peskaev: Yes, this is Comrade Stalin.
(a pause)
Sasha: Is Stalin in Moscow?
Peskaev: Yes, in Moscow. You too will be in Moscow.
Sasha: I want to go home!

Following the new 1952 slogan, Mikhalkov wrote a satirical play called *Raki* (The Crayfish), its theme not unlike that of *Revizor*. The trend towards satire became more marked after Stalin's death; Leonid Zorin's *Gosti* (The Guests) criticised certain defects in Soviet 'high society' which, originating as they did in bureaucracy and careerism, did not fit into the Marxist-Leninist category of 'remnants of the capitalist past'. After only two Moscow performances of the play, the collegium of the Ministry of Culture issued a communiqué stating that, as everybody knew, 'Soviet civil servants had no other aim than to serve the people and the fatherland'; they were 'the very embodiment of the people'. It condemned *Gosti* and similar plays, and reminded playwrights that 'Soviet art is strong in its truth, and cannot tolerate the slightest degree of mendacity . . . "Write the truth"; this is the constant advice of the

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Communist party to Soviet writers and artists.'[18] Although backed by no formal resolution of the central committee, the statement nevertheless discouraged many writers who might have wished to try their hand at drama or revert to it. The result was a most severe crisis in the theatre. At the end of 1955, the Minister of Culture, N. Mikhailov, noted that the number of theatre-goers had sharply declined during the new season.[19]

ALTHOUGH it produced no clear directive on the theatre, the 20th CPSU congress encouraged greater boldness in the choice of repertoire. The proportion of Russian classical (i.e. pre-revolutionary) plays fell from 26 per cent in 1953 (for the Moscow 'drama theatres'), to 17 per cent in 1956, and to 15 per cent in 1961. In 1953, Ostrovsky headed the list, with 274 performances (twenty different plays); by 1960 the number of Ostrovsky performances had fallen by 90 per cent to 25, and declined still further in the first six months of 1961. Maxim Gorki, who can be regarded broadly as a pre-revolutionary writer, suffered a similar setback. The number of performances of Gorki plays was 127 in 1953, and 7 and 10 in 1960 and 1961 respectively. On the other hand, while in 1953 and 1954 no adaptations for the stage of Dostoevsky novels were presented in Moscow, performances of such plays numbered 35 during the first six months of 1961, not far short of the figure for Tolstoy.

These figures, of course, do not show whether the theatre is full or empty, but in March 1957 the journal *Teatr* published figures showing the proportion of tickets sold in twelve Moscow theatres. None of the plays performed to capacity audiences belonged to the Russian classical repertoire.[20] Statistics on the plays most often performed in all Soviet theatres since 1955 confirm that the decline in popularity of the Russian classics is not confined to Moscow.[21]

As to foreign drama, Zhdanov's strictures on 'Western bourgeois culture' appear to have been disregarded. In the Moscow theatres, for example, the proportion of foreign plays in the repertoire has fluctuated from 22 per cent in 1953, to 34 per cent in 1957, and for 1961 was down to 29 per cent. Since 1957, there have been official protests against too frequent performances of Western contemporary unpolitical drama, and these 'alien' influences have been lessened though not suppressed. The problem for the theatres seems to have been to choose progressive, left-wing Western playwrights—though the meaning of the word 'progressive' has altered since 1953. In that year, the contemporary Western playwrights whose works were performed in Moscow were mainly writers like Howard Fast and Roger Vaillant, then both orthodox communists; Shaw's *Pygmalion* was one of the plays most often performed in Moscow—no

[18] *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 5 June 1954.

[19] Speech by N. Mikhailov at the conference of theatrical workers, *Vechernaya Moskva*, 16 November 1955. Cf. also 'Novye gorizonty', by Georgievsky, *Teatr*, 2, 1956. The author speaks openly of the resolute strike of theatre-goers in the autumn of 1955.

[20] Griboedov's *Zamuzhnaya nevesta*, had a 98 per cent attendance, *Teatr*, 3, 1957.

[21] See for instance *Teatr*, 6, 1956; 1, 1957; 6, 1961.

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doubt death makes writers ideologically more acceptable to the Soviet Communist party.

After the theatre-goers' strike at the end of 1955, and still more after the 20th congress, the definition of the word 'progressive' became much more elastic. Among the living figured Jean-Paul Sartre and Lilian Hellman, though their plays suffered severe re-writing. In Sartre's *La Putain Respectueuse*, decently renamed *Lizzy MacKay*, the ideologically reformed heroine ended by joining the ranks of the Peace Movement. But much less politically engaged playwrights were soon to reach the height of popularity. Priestley's *Dangerous Corner* and Eduardo de Filippo's *My Family* were among the plays most often performed; the repertoire even included detective plays by Agatha Christie and Frederic Knott (*Dial M for Murder*). They balanced the theatre budget, but were subjected to strong criticism by the party.

Many contemporary Western plays are still successful today. Two works by Arthur Miller, for instance, *Death of a Salesman* and *View from the Bridge*, were produced in Moscow in 1961. The *Teatr Satiry* recently put on Noel Coward's *Nude with a Violin*. Maeterlinck's *Blue Bird* has always been popular, and plays by Oscar Wilde, John Galsworthy, Stefan Zweig, Gerhard Hauptmann and E.-M. Remarque have been performed, apparently without strong opposition from party quarters. There is of course no guarantee that the texts will not be subjected to cutting or even rewriting.

A word must be said about the continued success of Western classics. A little-known comedy by Voltaire, *Monsieur du Cap Vert ou les originaux* was one of the best-attended plays of the 1956–57 Moscow season. The same holds good of Calderon's *Dama Duende*.

The popularity of Shakespeare has always been great. In 1954 he came second only to Ostrovsky (usurping the place previously held by Gorky) in the list of authors with the greatest number of plays being staged in Moscow at any given time. Nor has his popularity declined since—seven of his works were put on in Moscow in 1960, and his success is not confined to the capital. It may be noted that during the postwar 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign certain critics were accused of 'Hamletism', and that neither *Hamlet* nor *Macbeth* was performed, at any rate in the more important theatres, until after the death of Stalin.

CHANGES in the contemporary Soviet repertoire are important if judged by the Zhdanovite yardstick. The proportion of contemporary Soviet plays has increased slightly, and in Moscow amounts to half the total.[22] Statistics relating to the Soviet Union as a whole show that practically all the most frequently-staged plays are by contemporary Soviet authors. But on the whole the *nature* of this Soviet repertoire is very different from what it was after 1946. Although playwrights are still urged not to remain aloof from contemporary political problems,

[22] From 53 per cent in the first six months of 1953 it fell to 49 per cent in 1957, owing to the popularity of foreign plays. It was 58 per cent in the first six months of 1961.

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most of their works in fact deal with personal problems (*bytovie*), and Zhdanov's condemnation of 'so-called psychological' drama is completely ignored. The same (despite official criticism) can be said of his opposition to the 'light' repertoire. Since plays of this kind are not usually forbidden, they go on being performed, with increasing success. During the first six months of 1960, for instance, the very respectable Moscow Academic Theatre put on 35 performances of a light comedy entitled *The Road through Sokolniki*, by the young Soviet playwright Razdolsky. The subject is far removed from Zhdanov: it is the story of a young student who has failed his entrance to a University, becomes a servant in the family of a wealthy writer, and falls in love with the latter's wife. The play was criticised for its lack of ideological content at the conference of theatrical workers held in October 1958. As the *glavny rezhissor* of the Soviet Army Theatre wrote in 1957, 'the public reads the critics back to front: if a play is praised, one must refrain from going: if attacked, it has to be seen'.[23]

Generally speaking, light Soviet plays have become an important part of the repertoire, not only in Moscow but also in the provinces. Some of the most 'conservative' playwrights have turned to writing light works, a task which does not, of course, prevent them from striving to raise the morale of the theatre-goer, in accordance with party doctrine. But the great majority of Soviet plays that go on being produced, and not written with the sole aim of winning a prize, are to a large extent unpolitical. They can be considered, broadly speaking, as responding to the party's appeal for 'contemporary' themes, but more often than not are contemporary only in the sense that the action takes place in the present, and there is usually a happy ending to indicate the author's loyalty to the party and government.

This does not mean that the Soviet theatre-goer takes no interest in politics. On the contrary, playwrights have often dealt successfully with politico-ethical problems in a way which would have been considered 'politically alien' in Stalin's time, is still not approved by the 'conservative' section of the party bureaucracy, and meets with strong opposition from Stalinist critics.

Most illuminating in this respect are the attacks on the present Soviet repertoire made by V. Kochetov in his 1960 novel, *The Brothers Yershov*. Nothing has yet been written that shows more clearly how far the average successful playwright has deviated from Stalin's and Zhdanov's concept of 'engineers of the human soul'. Kochetov's book is full of blame for contemporary plays—the authors are not named, but are easily recognisable—which denounce the inhumanities of the Stalinist past.

Here is a short quotation from Kochetov's book, a passage complaining about a successful anti-Stalinist play:

[23] A. Popov, 'Our responsibility', *Teatr*, 11, 1957.

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> They saw the new play of an untalented but clever new playwright. He knew how to titillate the audience. In every single act all through the play a good man was being done down. Everyone was doing him down: the party organisation, the trade union, the factory management, some despicable individuals. He struggled through a flood of tribulations, rousing the audience's pity and even drawing tears from many female spectators.

Kochetov's book is a violent attack on the most popular trend among the young and even the older playwrights. It is notable that some of the works which have most boldly attacked the misdeeds and the bigotry of the Stalinist *apparatchiki* finally reached the stage, and met with great success, but in the teeth of stubborn opposition from the so-called right-wing faction.

Such was the case of *Odna* ('Alone'), by the young playwright Aleshin. Though vigorously opposed for a long time by the Deputy Minister for Culture, it was performed in 1956 with great success—it was one of five plays in Moscow that were completely sold out. *Odna* tells the story of an outstanding engineer, a communist, who divorces his wife in order to marry the woman he loves. He protests his fidelity to communism, but at the same time argues that the party has no right to interfere in his private life.

The Factory Girl, a play by another young author, Volodin, ridicules the almost unconscious falsity of a stupid Komsomol organiser, Bibichev. The heroine, a straightforward, plain-spoken factory girl, is very far from the 'positive heroes' of the recent past. She is proud of her critical mind and says bluntly: 'I do not care to pretend; here people say one thing and do another. If anyone tries to oppose such a state of affairs, that is his undoing'. In spite of much party criticism, the play was put on and had successful runs in 1957 and 1958. In Moscow it was even produced at the Army Theatre.

There are a great many such plays, either dealing with unpolitical, human problems, or criticising with greater or less audacity some of the typical features of Stalinism (while never, of course, calling in question the basic tenets of communism). This is not to say that 'conservative' works, by playwrights strongly opposed to anything that smacks of revisionism, do not get written and acted. The fact that *The Brothers Yershov* was adapted for the stage and performed in many theatres can only mean that this tendency is still strong in the party bureaucracy, to which many directors of theatres, especially in the provinces, belong. For the same reason Sofronov's new plays were among those most often performed in 1960. On the other hand, if plays by 'dogmatic' writers enjoy greater success with local party authorities than with the public (and are often staged as an excuse to put on very light plays at the same time), there are some fields in which political slogans do not run counter to the public taste. This is true of patriotic plays dealing with the past or with what may be termed 'Soviet patriotism' (including the cult of Lenin). Plays about heroes who died in World War II are often popular:

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a case in point is *Ivan Rybakov*, by Gusev, which tells the story of the son of an officer in the Civil War who, after behaving badly, redeems his honour by fighting bravely against the Germans. But it is difficult to find a public to attend, or playwrights to produce, so-called anti-cosmopolitan plays. The same is true of 'production drama' and in general of plays dealing with factory workers. The absence or scarcity of such plays has often been deplored by official critics.[24]

THE changes described concern the ethical and political content of Soviet drama. But the reaction against the Stalinist concept of socialist realism did of course embrace esthetic matters as well. The main issue, and the first to be discussed, was that of the *mise-en-scène*.

The Soviet tendency to canonise famous persons after their death should be borne in mind. This happened in the case of Mayakovsky, of whom Stalin wrote that he had been, and remained, the most gifted poet of the Soviet era ('indifference to his memory and his works is a crime'). Despite this canonisation, Mayakovsky's plays were completely ignored, at any rate in the big cities, until the death of Stalin. The staging of *Banya* and *Klop* by the Satire Theatre in 1954 was thus an important event. The stage managers, among them the highly gifted Vladimir Pluchek, put on modernist productions of both plays, which enjoyed a great success; in Stalin's time they would have been denounced as full of 'formalist stunts'. The main problem was how to get free of Stanislavsky's 'system', or at least free of the obligation to apply it strictly in all theatres. His methods were and still are scrupulously observed by the Arts Theatre, of which he was the director. The level of acting of the company is high, and, like that of the *Comédie Française* and other theatres with an established tradition, interesting to the foreigner; but in the eyes of a great part of the Soviet intelligentsia, especially the young, the Arts Theatre is looked upon as a museum. Under Stalin, any attempt to criticise it was regarded as 'anti-patriotic slander'. As the *Pravda* journalist Zaslavsky wrote in a book on the Soviet theatre published in 1947[25]: 'The Moscow Arts Theatre marked a turning-point, and not in Russian dramatic art alone . . . not one progressive theatre in Europe or America escaped the influence of Russian *mise-en-scène*. The "Stanislavsky System" won recognition wherever the theatre had not yet completely petrified into commercial enterprise, no longer in search of a goal but only repeating the old saws'.

The rebellion against standardisation of style became explicit after the twentieth CPSU congress. Some drama critics began to rehabilitate Meyerhold, at least partially, and also Tairov, whose Kamerny Theatre was closed down after the war, shortly before his death. The seventieth anniversary of Tairov's birth was celebrated at the beginning of 1956 at a

[24] Cf. 'Where are the plays about the working class?' in *Trud*, 11 December 1955. Cf. also A. Salinsky's speech at the conference of theatrical workers, *Teatr*, 12, 1958.

[25] D. Zaslavsky, 'The world significance of Soviet art', *Sovetsky Teatr* (Moscow, 1947), p. 26.

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meeting in the 'House of the Actor', attended by such writers as Fedin, Ehrenburg, and Olga Bergholtz. In winding-up a debate begun in 1957, the theatrical director M. O. Knebel, a well-known elderly actress, said that Stanislavsky was not responsible for the bureaucratic rule (*administrirovanye*) common under the 'cult of personality'. 'Stanislavsky's system had often been introduced forcibly; his authority had been used to suppress artists of other tendencies who tried to go their own way . . . meanwhile the name of Stanislavsky was the sole password for gaining admittance to the flock of "orthodox realism"'.[26] Although Madame Knebel emphasised her belief in the value of the Stanislavsky system, she compared it to antibiotics, which should be used sparingly. As for Meyerhold, she said he was a great artist, neglected for twenty years. He should not be reviled as a formalist, though it would be irresponsible to call him a socialist realist. Her conclusion was supported by the editors of *Teatr*. In spite of party criticism of that journal in 1957–1958, the posthumous rehabilitation of Meyerhold has become more and more outspoken, although most critics have to add that he made mistakes. His influence on the best theatrical directors of the younger generation is very great.

Stalinism had encouraged bad taste in staging, and its harmful results were not limited to theatre-goers. At a meeting of the 'artistic council' of the Ministry of Culture held in 1958, the gifted director of the Satire Theatre, Pluchek, emphasised how important a task it should be to raise the standard of public taste. 'Clouds pass, rose-water flows, and the audience starts clapping wildly. Every time I hear them applauding I feel sad, because it seems to me we are perverting the taste of theatre-goers' (*Teatr*, 3, 1958).

Interesting efforts have been made to break away from the standardisation in staging prevalent since the mid-thirties. If some of the attempts at modernity were of doubtful value (such as the 1955 production of Hamlet by Okhlopkov,[27] a former disciple of Meyerhold, now *Glavrezh* of the Mayakovsky Theatre), there have lately been some genuinely personal and interesting efforts. Ravenskikh's production of Tolstoy's *Power of Darkness* at the Maly Theatre (the director, M. Tsarev, is one of the best Soviet actors) was a big event in Russian theatrical circles. Ravenskikh's harshly realistic *mise-en-scène* (he is now *glavrezh* of the Pushkin Theatre, Moscow), showed him to be a most gifted producer; the production was recently staged in Paris at the *Théâtre des Nations*.

Another *glavny rezhissor* who was in disfavour towards the end of the Stalin dictatorship is Nikolai Akimov, now artistic manager of the Leningrad Comedy Theatre. (Akimov is, incidentally, a fine painter.) In 1931,

[26] M. Knebel, 'Is Stanislavsky's system universal?' *Teatr*, 6, 1957.

[27] Okhlopkov headed the 'Realist Theatre' which was merged in 1936 with Tairov's. His present theatre was founded during the war as a result of a merger between the Theatre of the Revolution (formerly headed by Meyerhold) and another theatre. It was named *Mayakovsky* in 1952. Okhlopkov was one of the numerous pupils of Meyerhold who later became staunch supporters of the Stanislavsky system (see M. Knebel, loc. cit.).

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his 'formalist' staging of Hamlet at the Vakhtangov Theatre, Moscow, incurred the wrath of the Stalinists. In 1956 he wrote that the profession of theatrical director should be chosen only by people who were not afraid of criticism.[28]

One of the most remarkable recent successes of Leningrad's Comedy Theatre was Akimov's production of E. Shvarts' enchanting play *The Shadow*, a fine and witty work on a subject borrowed from Chamisso's Peter Schlemyl and one of Andersen's tales. Written in 1940, it is one of the few Soviet contemporary plays of indisputable literary value.

It is still difficult to pass judgment on the quality of Soviet drama today. The interference of frequently incompetent authorities certainly does not encourage the best Soviet authors to begin writing for the stage or to revert to doing so. Neither Sholokhov, Fedin, nor Katayev have written any new plays. Leonov's *Golden Carriage*, in fact written in the forties, is by no means his best work. Selvinsky's *Great Cyril*, a verse drama composed for the 40th anniversary of the revolution, was not a success. This does not mean that good Russian playwrights cannot be found today. The situation may improve, and there is no reason to exclude, in the sphere of drama, the possibility of work of the same quality as, say, Kazakov's novels appearing. The shortcomings of many young Soviet playwrights are to some extent survivals of the past: they are suffering from their twenty-year isolation from the outside world. Their style is often negligent, and they are tempted to pander to the tastes of theatre-goers which have been depraved by 'socialist realism'. Moreover, the rewriting to which their plays are often subjected before performance makes their lot worse than that of novelists and poets, in spite of the very high royalties they receive.

There are, nevertheless, playwrights whose works do not have a solely documentary value. Such is the case of Victor Rozov, for instance, who has written several plays about young people. *Eternally Living*, the drama on which the film *The Cranes are Flying* was based, is of better quality than the screen play seen (and liked) by the Western public. It would not be surprising if better plays were on the way; there is at least a tendency in the Soviet leadership to admit the existence of artistic and literary values, and to recognise that much has yet to be done in this respect. Most playwrights are no longer 'engineers of the human soul'. Whatever their shortcomings, they are first and foremost playwrights, not political journalists who happen to write drama.

[28] N. Akimov, 'Teatr i Zritel', *Teatr*, 4, 1956. His portraits of theatre people were reproduced in *Teatr i Zhizn* (Leningrad, 1957).

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PLAYS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

A. J. C. Campbell

IN terms of overall size, the Soviet theatre is a mammoth. Moscow alone has seventeen theatres with a seating capacity of about 15,000, and Leningrad is not far behind. Most provincial towns, too, have their own theatre or theatres. Even so small and remote a centre as, say, Yakutsk in the Soviet Far East on the Lena River (population in 1956, 63,000) claims two theatres. All professional Soviet theatres have a permanent troupe of actors and rely not on long runs of single plays but on almost daily alternation of a number of plays over a period of weeks or months, with this repertoire being periodically renewed by the substitution of other plays, old and new, Soviet and foreign.

These quantitative indices, as Soviet authors, critics, actors, and directors will themselves on occasion admit, are not the whole story. The Soviet theatre is as yet, with some praiseworthy exceptions, a prisoner to staidness. Its efforts at innovation tend to be half-hearted or unduly contrived. Its admirable presentations of the classical Russian plays such as those of Ostrovsky and Gogol contrast sharply with its lack of feeling for and inability sincerely to convey modern times and modern problems. It plods along covering a great deal of ground but rather in the manner of a horse and cart than of any more up-to-date conveyance. It would nonetheless be unfair and unwise to overlook the glimmers of hope that are visible here and there. The tug-of-war between the forces of tedium, illustrativeness, inertia, and *poletaevshchina*, and those of exploration and innovation goes on, if in a sometimes ding-dong way, both above and below the surface between dramatists, theatres, producers, critics, actors, the official caretakers of the artistic proprieties, and all those, not forgetting audiences, who care one way or the other. It is well to remember that in the words of one Soviet actor there used to be a time 'when plays in large numbers were staged, populated with chest-thumping heroes, ideal models of virtue. They solved problems, problems to which life had contributed solutions far earlier; they readily humbled backward old fogies who had clung to the past with surprising and pointless tenacity. . . . They experienced love but in a somehow odd way, regulating their feelings by artificial norms, and they only drank as the curtain fell—at weddings, jubilees, or in celebration of some success'. This epoch is mercifully almost past, though vestiges of it can still be discerned in the works of Sofronov and the odd surviving troglodyte.

This article is not intended to give more than a fleeting impression of some of the highlights, some of the problems, and some of the advances and setbacks of the contemporary Soviet theatre in the early

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sixties, illustrated almost entirely from the Moscow background. It does not attempt to cover Soviet productions of Western plays, old or modern, nor Western presentations of their own theatre in the Soviet Union.

Soviet theatre-goers are, as a race, appreciative and eager. They are not prone to the hysterical adulation from which some Soviet ballet-omanes suffer, nor, since theatre tickets are relatively dear, are their visits undertaken as much on the spur of the moment as are those of Soviet cinema-goers. There is, it is true, a hard core among the young intellectuals and *fils à Papa* who pride themselves on boycotting public entertainment and who will rise only to the bait of a foreign theatre (or film, or exhibition), but this minority is a small and shortsighted one. Nevertheless it is probably true though quite unprovable that the younger generation which came of age after the last war is more discriminatingly critical than its elders and above all more impatient of didactic attitudinising. What does it get on the positive side?

ONE of the most interesting new developments has been the emergence and survival of a new Moscow theatre, the 'Sovremennik' (Contemporary), which is now safely and jauntily ensconced in new premises on Mayakovsky Square. Moscow wits coined for it the antithetical label 'Contemporary but premature; malicious not malignant'. Three years ago it graduated from giving performances at clubs and factories to a season of its own at the theatre-hall attached to the Sovetskaya Hotel; last year, after some heart-searching and zig-zagging in the intervening period by the Ministry of Culture, it was given its present premises in the centre of Moscow. After being temporarily rusticated to tours of the distant periphery and accused of ideological failings, it is now part of the Moscow scene. Much credit is due to it for its own consistency: it relied exclusively on young actors in the days when its members were precarious venturers from the Arts Theatre Studio—it has continued to do so. It originally showed plays which were not always to the taste of the custodians of orthodoxy: if it appears to be less off-beat now it is probably more a case of the beat having modified than of the Sovremennik having done so. Three of the more talked-of Soviet plays staged by it over the last three years have been—*Five Evenings* by Volodin (1959); *The Naked King* by Shvarts (1960); and *Moscow Time* by Zorin (1962). Volodin's play is an intimate glimpse into the pattern of personal relations between five people in Leningrad some time after the war; Ilyin has returned to look up his old girl friend Tamara, having himself been through difficult times elsewhere (perhaps in a camp, though this is not in the text). The play, which has little action and virtually no heroic dialogue (there are even some passing disrespectful words about Marx from Tamara's nephew) was played by the Sovremennik, with Efremov, the Sovremennik's young actor-producer, as Ilyin, in a quick, casual manner which marked it off

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from the 'self-transformation' approach beloved of the Soviet stage. It later earned the tribute of criticism on such grounds as ignoring the work-a-day life of its personages in favour of their personal emotional crises and as verbal coquetry with such sacrosanct institutions as Marx's works; Ilyin has also been described as a 'deserter from life'. By contrast, the Sovremennik's second 'succès de scandale', *The Naked King*, appeared to evoke relatively little official comment, though its birth pains in the last quarter of 1959 were greater and the gossip about it incommensurately more insistent. In line with Shvarts' other plays, *The Naked King*, written in 1934, is a wonderful political fairy tale, in which Hans Andersen's characters and situations are refashioned in such a way as to parody the habits of dictators, the ways of dictatorial societies, and the struggle of good against evil. *The Naked King* borrows from the three tales 'The Swineherd', 'The Emperor's New Clothes' and 'The Princess on the Pea'. In it Genrikh, the swineherd, and the Princess fall in love; the Princess is to be married off against her will to a neighbouring king; the king, backed up by his courtiers, is persuaded into dressing up for the wedding in an 'invisible' robe: his appearance naked in public persuades the Princess's father of his unsuitability as a son-in-law and exposes the whole court to public ridicule. There are innumerable pointed asides: the king's chief cook, whose culinary handbook was among the ones to suffer 'when the mode started up of burning books in the squares'; the king's illogical suspicion, on learning that the Princess failed to detect the pea under the mattresses, that perhaps she is a Semite; and the unbounded 'frank, direct' flattery of the First Minister. Prior to the King's appearance for the wedding the assembled crowd is reminded by the First Minister:

> Though I do know that you're the most devoted of subjects, I will remind you: in His Highness's palace you may only open your mouth to shout 'hurrah' or sing the national anthem. Point taken?
> *Crowd*: Point taken.
> *First Minister*: You didn't take it. You're already in the royal palace. So why are you saying something else instead of 'hurrah'! Well?
> *Crowd* (crestfallen): Hurrah.

The third play, Zorin's *Moscow Time* (*Po Moskovskomu Vremeni*), which first came on at the beginning of 1962, deals with the problem of de-Stalinisation in the context of a local party organisation, with Evstigneyev, perhaps the most versatile of the Sovremennik actors, cast as the newly arrived First Secretary of the Regional Party committee, Larin, who has to tackle a large number of issues in which the old hinders the new. Larin, who is presented as a sympathetic, friendly, and human thruster, soon comes into conflict with his former friend and patron the Town Committee Secretary, Kalmykov, an old-style Party official bewildered by the wind of change. At their crucial confrontation

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Kalmykov protests that it is a good thing that people should be afraid of him and remarks that 'it is but one step from creative thinking to violations of Party discipline'. At this Larin throws up his hands in despair, with the audience clearly on his side. At the end of the interview Kalmykov stumbles away muttering 'what will happen to our country?' Finally, Larin decides that Kalmykov will have to go because, as he tells his wife, Kalmykov 'is not a town: you can't just rename him'. Other titillating themes which form sub-plots in the play concern the half-humorous clash between a popular young oil-engineer Zvavich and a young girl Party organiser who is a model of stiltedness, which ends with Zvavich taking over, more from bravado than desire, the latter's Party post. There is also an intriguing though circuitous episode involving an emotional exchange between Larin and Zvavich's girl friend, Ksana, on the subject of the death during the purges of her father, a high official who had been one of Larin's friends. A final strand concerns the doings of a much-bemedalled collective farm chairman, Sedykh, who lives like a lord but refuses to help his less successful neighbours. 'Peter the Second', as Sedykh is known, keeps as a sort of court jester-cum-Cassandra a reactionary but glib old peasant who cultivates his resentments and lets Soviet reality drift by. This old peasant, who is the sole wittingly bad character in the play, is presented neither as a caricature nor as likely to mend his ways: his acid comments include one to the effect that both he and the communists place their hope in a future life—the difference being that he won't have to wait as long as they.

IF the Sovremennik is the most talked of Moscow theatre, its Leningrad counterpart in this sense is the Comedy Theatre, under the invigorating direction of Nikolai Akimov. Akimov, who might pardonably be mistaken for a kindly but mischievous goblin, has had a not unadventurous career, the latest stage of which has seen him back (since 1955) at the head of the Leningrad Comedy Theatre with which he had been associated as theatrical designer in the early twenties. Akimov has been a force for enlightenment in several ways: he has been the moving spirit behind the campaign for more up-to-date theatrical equipment; he has led the attack on 'academic sanctuaries' in the theatre; and, above all, he has helped inject a measure of cheeky laughter and pointed satire where it was badly needed. In 1961 the Leningrad Comedy Theatre delighted Moscow with its production of Shvarts' *The Shadow*, which had not been seen in the Soviet Union since 1940 save for the sole exception of the Satire Theatre's production of it around 1959. As Soviet critics acknowledge, Shvarts' plays lend themselves to more than one style of presentation. Under Akimov's wand, *The Shadow* became not only an illustration of the struggle of the good against formalism, hypocrisy, deceit, and careerism, but also a reminder, as one Soviet critic has put it, that the 'mechanism of the substitution of the vile shadow for man

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is the mechanism of treachery and fear'. In *The Shadow*, as in *The Naked King*, contemporary allusions and figures are not lacking: where the latter has its Minister of Tender Feelings and a sort of Amazonian court bodyguard which on parade takes its attire 'from the portrait', so the former has its secret councillors, its cannibals employed in the State pawnshop, and its executioner.

ON the reverse side of the medal there are still, unfortunately, a number of plays which portray the smiling, buxom, simple peasants who used to be the subject of films such as *Cossacks of the Kuban*, and those which still retain the comical black-and-white portrayals of Westerners, familiar from post-war Soviet plays such as *Meeting on the Elbe*, *Conspiracy of the Doomed*, *Two Camps*, etc. Sofronov appears to be adept in both fields. It would be over-optimistic to expect that the marrying off of his cheeky cook-house heroine ('Stryapukha Zamuzhem') in the second play devoted to her and her rollicking comrades on the State farm marks the end of his numerous ambitions on this theme. Sofronov's 1961 indictment of Anglo-American neo-colonialism in India under the title *The Doom of the Gods* was compounded of a set of Gillray-like portraits of white exploiters (including a potentially progressive but rich daughter), a number of irrelevant asides about defenders of peace and Afro-Asian solidarity, and a plot which must leave the spectator in considerable perplexity as to whether it is intended to be comedy or melodrama or both.

However, Sofronov and co. apart, plays about collective farm life tend to be both numerous and tedious. One of the most heralded among the salvo of such plays fired off to greet the 22nd CPSU congress in 1961 was Igor Sobolev's *The Boss* (*Khozyain*) put on at the Arts Theatre. Despite a commanding performance by Livanov as Linkov, the successful autocratic collective farm chairman who is unwilling to help out other, poorer farms, is domineering in his private life and patronising towards the local Party Secretary, this 'heroic comedy' was not a success. The most memorable moment was the simulated arrival on the stage, in the final act, of heavy lorries to gather in the grain at dark of night. In fact the play appeared to come alive only when Zueva, as Linkov's shrewd, bustling little mother-in-law, was slyly commenting on meat shortages and other day-to-day troubles. It is salutary that one Soviet critic has given warning against the delusion of thinking that the more Soviet art takes Akim's half-educated grandchildren as its model, the closer to the people it must be.

Of the simpliste black-and-white plays on east-west themes, the most outstanding recent example was Sheinin's *Game Without Rules* which had its premiere at the Ermolova Theatre in December 1961. This play was awaited with some curiosity, as its author, himself a former member of the Prosecutor's Office, had actually put 'negative' KGB (security)

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officials into it. However, if there were any who expected it to contribute to their knowledge of this unique institution they were disappointed. There is, indeed, one sinister, ill-intentioned KGB official in it, Romin, who at one stage says of an innocent suspect, 'give him to me and he'll split like a walnut'; there is also the odd piquant remark such as the reference to the disastrous consequences 'if the pince-nez [i.e. Beriya] gets to hear of it'. But the main moral of the play appears to be that while the KGB sticks by the rules, save for a few discreditable exceptions, its American counterparts do not. The action takes place in occupied Germany immediately after the last war. The Americans, who include an expansive intelligence General, Greywood, and his resident agent, Mackenzie, are both villains and idiots who are foiled at every turn. They drug a young girl; they employ in their service a Nazi war criminal; and towards the end Mackenzie goes to Moscow in person, to set up a kidnapping ploy, disguised as a specialist attending a Congress of Orientalists. Greywood and Mackenzie have no morals and no convictions, though they are occasionally assailed by doubts engendered by the high principles of their Soviet opposite numbers.

The renewed denunciation of Stalin's misdeeds at the congress in October 1961 again paraded the theme of the 'cult' for the attention of playwrights, as it had been dangled before them, though less insistently, since 1956. The process of getting Stalin out of their system is no less absorbing for the public than for the playwrights; hence this has been and will continue to be for some time their main preoccupation. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, theatres, producers, and authors are always one or more paces behind—with the result that the theatre is usually not so much beyond the fringe as well inside it. An extremely interesting article by the playwright Shtok in the May 1962 issue of *Teatr*, which dealt fairly and frankly with the question of the cult and the Soviet theatre, made the following very relevant points: the cult killed plays before they were written—'why write what is doomed'; current plays about bad collective farm chairmen and Beriya's investigators should have been written ten years ago; there is no great courage involved in unmasking what has already been unmasked; what was needed were plays dealing with subjects on which no resolutions as yet existed. It is quite arguable that this process of exhumation is of mixed benefit: it is protracted; it tends to direct the eye backwards towards Meyerhold and Tairov, to name but two landmarks; and it is not a thorough clinical scrutiny since it stops short of answering the two crucial questions: how far does the plea of ignorance of the facts exonerate? And how far can the cult be written off as an isolated and fortuitous phenomenon? As Pogodin's plays and reminiscences show, the cult was a traumatic experience for writers and continued to be so even after it had been denounced; others have revealingly written that they themselves never arrested, betrayed, or incriminated anyone.

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THOUGH the past weighs heavily on the consciences of some and on the minds of others, it would be false to see it as dominating the theatrical scene. There is a place for the heroic portrayal of the present. There is also a place, even if not all official critics would yet agree, for plays with a more intimate approach.

One play which might be regarded as coming in the heroic category was Pogodin's *Living Flowers*, put on at the Komsomol Theatre in mid-1960 shortly after Tolmazov had been appointed its new chief producer. Here, too, the central figures are the members of a brigade who are struggling to surmount their own individualist leanings. Their young leader is seen at one stage consulting (in his dream) with Lenin about the frailties of human nature. The image of Lenin, portrayed as a warm-hearted, almost casual conversationalist, is persuasively constructed. There is also an unusually effective portrait of an anti-social, acquisitive middle-aged woman who comes near to suborning an honest Soviet worker with her religious nagging.

It is frequently difficult to segregate the heroic from the intimate plays in the Soviet theatre. In the latter category might be included Rannet's *The Poachers* and Rozov's *Unequal Struggle*, as well as, possibly, *Colleagues*, by Aksenov and Stabavoy and *A House of Cards* by Stukalov. *The Poachers* observes a laudable economy: only three characters and only one set—a forester's lonely hut somewhere in Estonia. With these Rannet achieves an interesting clash of wills and temperaments between Aadam, the old recluse hugging his memories, his Bible, and his notions of a vengeful God, Yaagup, once the suitor of Aadam's wife, now an embittered painter of abstract subjects at odds with himself and with his artistic detractors, and Meela, Aadam's daughter, who serves as the innocent prism through which Aadam's self-righteousness is shown to be a meaner thing than Yaagup's cynicism. Rozov's *Unequal Struggle* is an up-to-date variant of the conflict between fathers and sons with two young people, Slava who has just gained a place at Moscow University, and Liza, the girl-next-door, bravely facing up to the distrust and crudity they encounter at the hands of their elders. It is Liza and Slava who eventually win out in the struggle. *Colleagues*, adapted from a story by Aksenov, has two features in common with Rozov's play: it too was staged at the Maly Theatre Filial, and it too deals with the young generation, more particularly three young Leningrad graduates. The action revolves around the bright boy of the trio, Zelenin, who goes to serve as a doctor in a remote Karelian village, to the alarm of his upper middle-class parents. In his self-appointed exile Zelenin, despite his youth, inexperience, and initial tactlessness, emerges triumphant from a clash with a trio of comically vicious hooligans and, at the end, from a testing emergency operation. Stukalov's *A House of Cards* at the same theatre, has the most complex plot and the largest cast of these plays, but, despite some good moments, it is too diffuse.

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It does contribute a magnificent portrait of an evil old man who, huddled in a rocking chair among his rags, surveys the street from a balcony, and also an appearance by the talented actress Roek in a minor role.

One of the weak points of the Soviet theatre recently has been a shortage of good comedies devoid of didactics. Plays like Shtein's *Autumn Violins* and Sofronov's *Million for a Smile* are more sociological slapstick than comedy. The one honourable exception, *Ladies and Hussars*, put on at the Vakhtangov Theatre with great dash, pretty ladies, and splendid gowns, was written by the Polish dramatist, Fredro, in 1825. There have, on the other hand, been some excellent revues, of which *Blots* by the Mironov-Belov-Mennaker trio, which came to Moscow from Rostov in 1960, was a deserved favourite, not to mention the various revues pivoted around the evergreen Raikin. For those who seek classical Soviet satire, there are Mayakovsky's *The Bath House* and *The Bed Bug*, and Ilf and Petrov's *The Twelve Chairs* and *The Golden Calf*, all produced with verve at the Satire Theatre.

There is thus a reasonably varied assortment of plays to be seen at any given moment. Moreover, production methods, type of repertoire and, to a lesser extent, methods of action, differ between theatres. In the Mayakovsky Theatre, Okhlopkov is the dominating influence and hence production style is the corner-stone of its productions. With his cultivation of mass effects and of slightly ancient novelties, such as ramps into the auditorium, and actors making an entrance from among the audience, Okhlopkov's style is not to everyone's taste. It was to be seen at its most pronounced in his 1962 production of Euripides' *Medea*, staged in the Tchaikovsky concert hall with an orchestra of some 100 musicians packing the space between the spectators and the scene, and with a corresponding modern supersonic presentation on the stage. Somewhere towards the other end of the spectrum comes the Moscow Arts, which has been under renewed criticism for marking time since Stanislavsky. Certainly it is the case that the Arts Theatre has not yet achieved the success in the new plays it has staged as in its performances of Chekhov or Gorky. The Maly Theatre continues to present its admirable performances of Ostrovsky's monumental examinations of the cheerful rogueries of Tsarist merchants, government officials and their consorts, while its Filial has earned quite a place for itself in the presentation of problem plays about the younger generation. At least two Moscow theatres, the Komsomol and the Ermolova, have undergone abrupt changes of management. Save, however, for the emergence of the Sovremennik, there have been few major institutional changes. At times some of the Moscow theatres are a little reminiscent of the two Irishmen who beg their friends to restrain them from hitting each other, a thing which, for all their pugilistic antics, neither of them has the slightest intention of doing.

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Perhaps because it has been relatively quiescent, the Soviet theatre has met with not unsympathetic treatment from the authorities. It is true that the extent of cuts and changes resulting from the preliminary and subsequent censorship of plays is unascertainable. It is a relevant factor which has operated, for example, in relation to the initial productions of Shvarts' *The Naked King* at the Sovremennik and of Shatrov's *Gleb Kosmachev* at the Ermolova Theatre. On the other hand, there has undoubtedly been a shift towards greater flexibility. It is hard to imagine that Shvarts' *Dragon*, recently put on in Leningrad, would have been put on three years ago, nor, surely, would *Moscow Time* have seen the light of day. If the comparison is made with the Soviet theatre of ten years ago, the change is even more marked. The greatest critic of them all, whose cultural inclinations were towards *Night Over Miami* and folk-dance ensembles, is no more. New plays and new theatres are no longer ruled out. It is to be hoped that pioneering plays already written will now see the light of day as well as the plays yet to be written. Even without ideological coexistence, there is still latitude for exploration.

POLITIQUE ETRANGERE

La grande revue des questions internationales

No. 4/1962

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Le numéro : 4,80 NF

France et Comunnauté : 25 NF

Etranger : 33,50 NF

Adresser les abonnements au Centre d'études de politique étrangère, 54, rue de Varenne — Paris 7ème — C.C.P. 1865-41 Paris

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THE CURRENT SEASON

A Note from the Stalls

Mark Frankland

A YOUNG Russian recently explained to me why he thought Arnold Wesker's play *Roots* was not suitable for production by the Sovremennik Theatre, the most progressive and lively of the Moscow theatres. Part of the trouble, he explained, was that *Roots* showed a British 'peasant' family that was suffering from a sort of material affluence and this was something which a Soviet audience had no experience of. The second objection was the character of Ronnie, the intellectual who never actually appears on the stage. The trouble here was that Ronnie was shown in too critical a light—too critical, that is, for the Sovremennik and its audience, who are the sort of people very much committed to the idea that intellectuals are forces for the good and anxious that other people should recognise this too.

This demand that what is seen on the stage should have a very close connection with the lives and aspirations of the audience gives a feeling of excitement to the Moscow theatre which the plays, judged just as plays, seldom merit. And, of course, it is the differences of opinion about what the aspirations, social and moral, of the audience are or should be that provide the theme of most of the theatrical controversies.

People, particularly foreigners, whose business or pleasure it is to study the controversies that reign in almost every part of Soviet life are in some danger of thinking that the most controversial play in Moscow is the best or most popular. So perhaps just for the record I should say that the most popular new show in Moscow this season so far seems to be the Arts Theatre's production of *Dear Deceiver*, Jerome Kilty's play based on the correspondence of Mrs Patrick Campbell and Bernard Shaw. One might agree with some Soviet critics that the popularity of *Dear Deceiver*, for all its charm and merits, is scarcely a compliment to the rest of the Moscow season. After all, Soviet society is going through such a fascinating period of development at the moment that any play which really grasped this in a bold and proficient way would seem certain to put the letters of an English actress and an Irish playwright, however brilliant, into the shade.

There is one new play in Moscow which, though technically by no means perfect, does seem to sum up the two themes that are causing most controversy in the theatre world at the moment. This is Volodin's *The Elder Sister* ('Starshaya sestra').

Volodin is now in his late thirties and was recently named by Viktor Rozov, one of the playwrights most closely conected with the Sovremennik, as the most interesting young dramatist working in the

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Soviet Union. Like one or two others of the more interesting plays in Moscow, *The Elder Sister* was first performed in the capital by a visiting Leningrad company, but it has now been rewritten and cut for the Sovremennik.

The main characters are the elderly Ukhov, an engineer by profession, and his two nieces Nadya, the elder, and Lida whom he rescued from an orphans' home. At the beginning of the play Lida is still at school and in the middle of a romance with a schoolboy of whom her uncle does not approve. Nadya is already working and studying to be an engineer like her uncle. She, it turns out, has always wanted to be an actress but out of deference to her uncle's wishes and common-sense advice took up the solid profession of an engineer instead. But she has transferred her hopes onto her sister whom she is coaching for the entrance exam into drama school.

However, it turns out that it is Nadya who impresses the examiners in the end, and so begins a struggle with herself and with her uncle to make the stage her profession. The sub-plot is provided by the chequered story of Lida's love. Ukhov had eventually managed to persuade Lida to give up her boy friend, whom he has all along judged by his plain man's common-sense rule of thumb. Afterwards it turns out that the boy is not the young show-off Ukhov held him to be; he grows up to be a talented scientist. He marries but meets Lida again and they start a muddled affair.

Ukhov, a kind man (he did take the children out of an orphans' home on his own initiative), is thus shown to have nearly ruined the lives of his two nieces with his common-sense advice and his plain man's standards. Part of his nieces' trouble is that they have already to a certain extent learned to look at things in his way, to make remarks like 'A normal person simply cannot understand that'. Lida rejects her boy friend in this way and Nadya, in the same way, nearly decides to forget all about the theatre.

The important point is that Ukhov does not seem to stand for anything sinister. He does not even—as some Soviet critics have tried to make out—represent the spirit of *meshchanstvo*, of 'bourgeois' philistinism or narrowmindedness. Much more he stands for the accumulated common-sensical experience of the past. It is against this that Nadya has to fight to find her own individuality or personality. She only just manages to do this in time. As her producer tells her when she is working desperately hard in the early days of her theatrical career, 'You know what you've lost [since the time he first saw her act as an amateur]. You can think it to be a little or you can think it to be everything. Individuality'.

By the end of the play both girls have come out with their declarations of protest against their uncle and his common sense. 'Uncle has looked after us,' says Lida. 'Uncle gave us life. Now just let him let us live

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freely for a bit.' Nadya cries out at the end of the play, when she accuses Ukhov of having destroyed Lida's happiness: 'We cannot live in your way . . . for us to live in your way is to die.'

The claim made by implication in the play, that people, and particularly young people, should be able to decide for themselves how to live, and not be bound by reverence towards past experience, is immediately understandable to the sort of people who pack out practically every performance of all the Sovremennik's productions. This concern with, and tenderness for, the individual (quite different from the self-obsession of the individual that one sometimes comes across in modern Western literature) is of course the hallmark of much new writing here. Indeed, it is a principle to which at least lip-service is paid in more and more public pronouncements on social problems. As one young Russian put it to me: 'It may not seem very exciting or new to people from the West to see plays in which concern is shown for the individual and his problems, but for us, and particularly those of us who are just old enough to remember the old days, it is exciting.'

Volodin's play also provides a good illustration of two other problems which are being much discussed here at the moment and will almost certainly get a lot of attention at the young writers' conference scheduled for this winter. They might be called the 'generation problem' and the problem of 'social committedness'.

THE theatre in recent years has seen a lot of plays in which the young generation is shown in conflict with an elder generation that has been partly maimed by its past experiences. The official line on this is clear: there is and can be no real conflict between generations in Soviet society (as indeed there can be no conflict between the younger writers and their elders). The relationship between generations, in official eyes, seems to be a sort of relay race in which the old hand on the baton to the young, but both of course are running in the same direction and with the same goal in view. Plays like Rozov's *A,B,C,D,E,* have been criticised for getting this wrong. In this play one of the young heroes says to his father: 'And why must I think like you do? I love everything that's good. But you are content with the good and the bad. You've got used to it.' *Starshaya sestra* is clearly a play with something important to say on this subject, particularly since it seems to go out of its way to establish that Ukhov, the older generation's representative, is by no means a 'bad' man.

The question of 'social committedness' is equally clearly raised by the play. One critic wrote of it: 'Her longing for the stage . . . to assert herself as a personality, gives birth to Nadya's protest. But not a desire to be useful to people, to bring them light and happiness, to assert the ideals of good and humanity. That philosophical content of Nadya's

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protest which could have made the figure of the older sister really contemporary . . . is only very roughly disclosed.'

In this connection a remark of I. Sobolev, a young writer whose play *Khozyain* is in production at the Moscow Arts Theatre, about his aim in writing, is relevant: 'I am convinced of one thing: to live and be useful in the general march towards communism it is necessary to work hard, to create, to create with great reverence towards all who labour, to create things that sing of labour and the people of toil. That for me is the central theme.'

This is clearly a high degree of social committedness—or *grazhdanstvennost*, in the most obvious sense. However, the term *grazhdanstvennost* is a great deal more flexible than the concept of *partiinost* (party-mindedness, putting the interests of the party first), which was recently held to bind writers.

It is perfectly possible to make out a claim that *Starshaya sestra* fully possesses the quality of *grazhdanstvennost* because this is a concept that is open to sophisticated interpretation. There is for example a scene in which one of the girls in Nadya's orphanage comes to tell her how much pleasure she got from seeing Nadya in her first very small professional role. The implication here is presumably that living up to the demands of one's individual personality is the proper way to bring 'light and happiness' to other people, that the two are by no means incompatible.

A play which is 'socially committed' in the most obvious sense, as well as showing concern for the individual, is Arbuzov's very popular *Irkutsk Story*. Its success tells one quite a lot about the problems of Soviet playwrights. It was first staged just over two years ago at the Vakhtangov Theatre in a very accomplished production by Yevgeni Simonov (who, still in his thirties, has just been appointed to run the Maly Theatre). It has been a constant favourite since then, not so much with the intellectuals as with parties, often of young people, from factories and farms round Moscow—the Moscow equivalent perhaps of those charabanc parties which are so important in the life of some London West End productions.

As might be expected, a play popular with such an audience has a simple message (in this, of course, it is like many other plays in Moscow). It is that the combination of a good man plus honourable work is a potent soul-saver. The soul saved in this case is Valya, a young girl working in a settlement near Irkutsk on the River Angara, who at the beginning of the play is shown as a rather stupidly affected girl too interested in the boys. The lesson she is taught by Sergei, the honourable young worker who marries her, is also the highly 'socially committed' theme of the play. 'What does a man need for happiness?' Sergei says to Valya. 'That his work is just a bit better than he is himself. . . .

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Do you understand ? If a person does a real job, a useful job—he himself becomes better than he was.'

Sergei finally is drowned in an accident and the play ends with Valya deciding to work as a member of the excavator crew he headed rather than live partly off the charity of her husband's workmates.

The portrayal of character and behaviour is simple to the point of sentimentality, but there is no doubt of its genuine appeal. Indeed, one's judgment of a Moscow play is always incomplete unless one has seen the audience's reactions. The Moscow intelligentsia may complain about the poor state of modern Soviet drama but the theatres do a good business with the plays that there are.

A PLAY of a very different sort is . . . *more dangerous than an enemy* (opasneye vraga), written by two Leningrad academics, Al and Rakov. This was first shown in Moscow by the Leningrad Comedy Theatre which is under the direction of N. P. Akimov, one of the veterans of the Soviet theatre.

Putting a really sharp satire on the Moscow stage is not without its problems of course, but . . . *opasneye vraga* seems now quite secure from attack. The Leningrad Comedy Theatre's production has even been awarded a diploma for being in the spirit of the 22nd Party congress. (Another satire playing in Leningrad, Shvarts' *The Dragon*, about how heroes who kill tyrannical dragons can themselves become tyrants, has not yet been seen in Moscow.) . . . *opasneye vraga* is really a satirical farce aimed at bureaucrats who still work in the old style learnt during the days of the ' cult of personality '. The action takes place in the Kefir Institute (kefir is a sort of yoghourt), and the characters are clearly divided between the bad—the bureaucrats—and the good—the scientific workers (whose work is hampered by the bureaucrats), and the deputy director in charge of scientific work who is the only identified member of the Party.

A rumour reaches the bureaucrats that Moscow is about to start a campaign against fools. In great fear they go through a lot of complicated scheming, in which the Director of the Institute also takes part, to avoid being purged. Eventually the scientific staff—who are in fact just on the verge of an important discovery—are framed. There is a very splendid scene in which the Director rehearses his staff in the speeches of accusation they are to make, right down to such fine details as the quality of applause that his own speech is to get.

The plan is confounded when one of the bureaucrats discovers the rumour was false. This leads all the junior staff to plan an elaborate stab in the Director's back. But there is one more twist to the plot. The Director decides that the only way he can re-establish his superiority is to be the first to request a transfer to other, less important, work, because he feels he is ' out of touch with the spirit of the times '. Younger people are needed. Alone on the stage, he confides to the audience his hopes

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that this will be seen as a magnificent gesture which will be taken up throughout the land. He imagines his picture appearing in the press, articles about him, portrait busts being made of him as a new sort of national hero. However, he is caught out once more by his staff, who all put in similar confessions that they are out of step with the times and need demotion and transfer.

An outline of the plot cannot indicate the sharp and occasionally daring wit which makes up for the amateur construction of the play and the flatness of the characters. There is, for example, the personnel manager, clearly an ex-policeman. His first words are spoken in answer to a knock on his office door. 'Bring him in . . .' he shouts, and then hurriedly corrects himself to say 'Come in.' In walks a drunken old worker who is applying for a job. The personnel chief locks the door and submits the man to as near a police grilling as he feels he can get away with, asking questions like 'Did either of your parents speak foreign languages ?'

Here again audience reactions are important. When I went to see the play a second time in its current Moscow production my impression was that it performed a sort of cathartic function in that it said publicly many things that the audience must have discussed or joked about in private. The older people in the audience laughed like respectable middle-aged people hearing rather blue jokes, but some of the young people were openly convulsed with laughter. The freedom to satirise bureacrats on the stage is an encouraging sign for the future. The main obstacle now to seeing really good plays in Moscow is quite simply the absence of any great dramatists. But if the Soviet Union can now produce really good young poets and prose-writers there is no reason why dramatists should not follow. The restrictions partly imposed on playwrights by both the quality of the audience and the demands of orthodoxy do not now seem to be in themselves insuperable.

PANORAMAS

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SOVIET PAINTING: TRADITION AND EXPERIMENT

Alain Besançon

FOR the last few decades the world of Russian painting has been divided between the sector which has most of the means of expression (exhibitions, reviews, etc.) at its disposal, and that which is deprived of them. On the strictly esthetic plane, there is no insuperable line of demarcation between them, for questions of politics and of personalities may intervene. But for the Western student such a situation has its perplexities. For if he contents himself with the official sources he covers only a portion of his field of study, and not the most fertile. And if he wants to go beyond this, he has to put too much trust in memories of his personal travels, in such imperfect evidence as he has been able to collect, in articles equally founded upon recollections and hearsay, rarely accompanied by photographic reproductions. Hence the conjectural character of the present study.

One can at least reduce the risk of error by dealing with both sectors simultaneously. What, after all, have we to do with sensational reports about this or that abstract painter working in Moscow or Leningrad? What matters most are the signs of an evolution affecting the whole domain of painting, including the relations between artists and the Soviet public.

Now, for ten years past there has been a loosening-up in the system which is nevertheless still coherent and rigid enough to remind one of the establishment under Nicholas I. In the absence of private patronage on any scale, an institution (the Academy, the Artists' Union) distributes commissions, organises exhibitions, and confers upon the painter one of the four grades of 'honoured' (*zasluzhenny*) or 'people's' (*narodny*) artist of the national republic or of the USSR. The administration is also the guardian of a body of doctrine, which may be called 'socialist-realism' or, more commonly, the 'esthetic of the subject', and which rests upon the authority of Chernyshevsky, Stasov, and Plekhanov, reinforced by that of Marx and a few sentences from Lenin. This doctrine can make valid references to a very great number of works produced in Russia during the last hundred years, and it enables one to evaluate any picture of the past or present according to criteria that are simple and easily applicable. Also, this is the teaching that has been handed out for several generations to the Russian public, which has known no other, except during a very brief period at the height of the Revolution. Western public opinion abandoned academicism only with great reluctance; but that did not matter much, for its opinion was no longer asked for. Russian opinion is still more conservative, has been given every means to express itself in favour of socialist-realism, and is largely responsible for the defeat of the avant-garde towards the middle of the twenties: it still powerfully

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influences the control of the modes of artistic expression. All this constituted a closed system, and the surprising thing is not that it has lasted so long, but that it is beginning to break open.

At first sight, nothing seems changed. For the majority of the visitors to the All-Union exhibition at the Old Riding School, which is the principal artistic event of the year, all that matters is the emotional value of the subject, the cleverness with which the artist composes a dramatic or moving scene. A year ago I joined a group of provincial visitors and listened to their comments and the questions they put to the guide and lecturer. Before a picture by Tkacheva, *The Mothers*, which shows several peasant women seated with infants on their knees: 'Why has that woman got such a tired face? Why does that other one look so sad? Should not the painter have given Soviet mothers a more optimistic expression?' In front of another, a particularly unhappy painting representing a meeting, held before an urn containing the ashes of a victim of Buchenwald, some criticised the way the characters were posed, others their expressions (not vengeful or heroic enough), but no one the insignificance of the design or the ugliness of the colour. Even if this sample of the visiting public has only relative value, this way of looking at painting seems to me widely prevalent. It predominates without being questioned in the two reviews published by the Union of Artists, *Iskusstvo* and *Tvorchestvo*.

Let us look at some recent numbers. Each number contains an editorial or a theoretical article, linked with the congress of the Artists' Union, or the 22nd congress of the Communist party. Zimenko, in 'The Man, the Character, the Image' (*Iskusstvo*, 2, 1962), quotes whole pages from the CPSU programme. Sergei Gerasimov, in 'Thinking of the Future' (ibid., 1, 1962), denounces abstract art as 'incompatible with our culture'. Experimentation and 'the art of the laboratory' create art only when they enable the painter to achieve social significance. What interests the masses is not novelty (novatorstvo), but the art of communism. He has a menacing phrase for the 'moral stilyagi' who have won a dubious renown in the pages of the reactionary American review, *Life* (alluding to a report, incidentally incompetent, upon heterodox painting in Moscow). Apresian defends the 'unshakeable principles' (ibid., 4, 1962): according to him, the cult of personality did not prevent Soviet art from flourishing. 'The most important condition for the successful resolution of the problems that present themselves to Soviet art, namely, the elevation of its educational function, is the direction of the Party.' It would be possible, but needless, to multiply quotations of this kind indefinitely. As for the works that are reproduced, these are worthy of the tradition of Grekov, of Gerasimov and Yoganson: Moiseyenko's *The Reds arrive*: mounted men of the Red Army riding through a village liberated from the Whites, in the midst of a joyful population; Nasedkin's *At the Kolkhoz*: in a village during the collectivisation, a committee of poor peasants passing down the main street, mockingly watched by frightful kulaks; Pankov's *In the Dormitory*: a coquettishly attired young woman

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sitting in the middle of a long row of beds; the surroundings are redolent of domestic peace and comfort. This picture illustrates an article entitled 'Life incarnating the Truth' (ibid., 4, 1962); Korsev's *The Painter*: in Paris, a miserable painter drawing something in chalk on the pavement; his beret lies upside down beside him to collect the alms of the passers-by. This picture, *Iskusstvo* (4, 1962) tells us—and I was able to verify this myself—enjoyed an outstanding success at the All-Union exhibition.

HOWEVER, for all the mutual congratulation and the satisfaction everywhere proclaimed, *Iskusstvo* itself betrays an aggressiveness of manner which seems to mask a certain disquietude. And in fact, there are forces at work undermining the fine façade of security. There are no frontal attacks, but oblique, long-term pressures which are already producing some effects.

First of all, there is pressure from outside the sphere of painting, but very powerful—that of the architects. Since about 1958, Soviet architects, who previously devoted their best efforts to exceptional buildings, have suddenly had to adapt themselves to mass construction. They have had to assimilate a series of new techniques (pre-fabrication, standardisation of materials, construction by means of large units, certain kinds of utilisation of pre-set concrete, and the creation of large urban buildings)—techniques which, in the West, have progressed hand-in-hand with an architectural esthetic that owed a great deal to the new painting. It has been found difficult to borrow some elements of this modern complex without adopting all the others. And although a fresco by Gerasimov may harmonise with an architecture like that of the Hotel Ukraine, it clashes irremediably with that of a construction of glass and steel like the great exhibition pavilion at Sokolniki—which is derived, if distantly, from Mondrian (cf. *Arkhitektura SSSR*, 5, 1962). The problem is acute, and is a frequent subject of discussion, especially among architects. Recently, a two-day conference was held in Moscow, attended by representatives of the Architects' Union and the Artists' Union (cf. *Tvorchestvo*, 4, 1962). Goncharov, the painter, denounced the abuses of what he called 'the modern style', the way the human figure is presented in friezes, the abandonment of modelling and perspective. While he repudiated any wish to return to the errors of the cult of personality, he wanted to maintain the heritage of the past. Serov, another painter, attacked decorativism. Strigalov, on the contrary, vigorously criticised, as unsuitable, the decorations of the underground stations Kievskaya and Belorusskaya. Prudent though they were, the speakers were aware that there is a crisis, and that it is the painters who are on the defensive. The proposed decoration for the Volga dam, '22nd congress of the CPSU', includes several great stylised figures, raised to the dimensions of the scheme, bearing sputniks and doves of peace (*Arkhitektura*, 4, 1962). This recalls the decorations of some pre-war international exhibitions, but it is not ugly; and though there is nothing to show that this modest progress will

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be surpassed in the near future, it nevertheless marks a considerable advance.

HARD upon the frontiers of painting, the decorative arts are in a spate of change. Here again, the requirements of mass production are getting the better of the heavy, curvilinear, last-century style that answered to the limited demand of a small minority which was in love—as Power in Russia traditionally is—with pomp and solemnity. But you cannot supply millions of people with carved armchairs, bronze electroliers in the Victorian style, or with huge sofas upholstered with red velvet. So these arts had to look over the frontiers, where they found not only techniques of furnishing and of production in series, but also an international style fully elaborated. Armchairs and chairs in moulded plastics, book-cases and cupboards in sections, geometrical shapes and vividly contrasted colours—all these are to be found today in the new Soviet flats, clubs, and restaurants. And here I must mention the positive part played by the review *Dekorativnoe Iskusstvo*, which campaigns against 'bad taste'. For example, it ridiculed the 'flashy' style of the copperworkers' House of Culture and the vulgarity of the tapestry hangings sold in the Moscow shops (No. 6, 1962); it hails as a success the fine metal jewellery of Zozulia and of Zhabotinskaya (No. 5, 1962); it supports the latest initiatives taken in the Soviet Union in matters of industrial esthetics—'functional' tongs, automobile models, etc. With its pleasant presentation, original illustrations, and full-page pictures, this review provides in itself a school of good taste and modernity.

Thus the architects and decorators are creating a new setting for the daily life of the Russian people and giving them an artistic education in opposition to that of the last hundred years. Unlike the effort of the intrepid avant-garde of the twenties, this is a mass education corresponding to the cultural level of the country. It is particularly well received among the young, who associate technical progress with a certain modernism of forms. Even if this does not amount to a real introduction to modern art, it is preparing the public to accept its major products later on.

On the other hand, an attentive study of the great mass of paintings in the official exhibitions shows that divergent currents are beginning to appear. Consider Kugach's *Before the Dance*, which attracted so much attention at the Riding School exhibition: some young girls are quietly seated on a bench awaiting their partners. The success of this formally commonplace work is due to its abandonment of all the prescribed emphasis and heroics, its spirit of naturalism and truthfulness. The same trend towards sincerity is to be found in contemporary Soviet literature, a trend towards truth of feeling, expressed with the aid of the classical techniques of 19th-century novel-writing. In painting, the result is ambiguous. The previous 'esthetic of the subject' is preserved, but its sentimental content (socialist-realism) is transformed. About 1900, the *Mir Iskusstva* similarly translated the subjects of village life into the life of the court, of populism into the a-political; and that was the beginning

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of the end of the reign of the *Peredvizhnik* social painting and the dawn of Russian painting. Some painters now go further: because their pictures are still strictly representational, they have little difficulty in getting past the hanging committees, who perhaps fail to perceive that what they are admitting are discreet experiments in pure painting, in any case outside the category of subject painting. These are almost always still life or landscape paintings. In those of Domashnikov, very small human beings people an immense, legendary, almost fantastic natural scenery (cf. the series *A Little Town in the Urals*, *Iskusstvo*, 3, 1962). The still life paintings by Kopitseva of Leningrad make no attempt to conceal the obvious influence of Matisse. Both these painters were born in 1924. It is in the same direction, but more spectacularly, that painting is developing in some of the Soviet republics, notably in the Baltic and the Caucasian; while the Ukraine, for instance, seems to me to be trying to out-do the academicism of Gerasimov. The Latvian Povilaitis, the Estonians Allsalu and Okas, compose very pleasing landscapes in minor harmonies of blue, grey, and black. Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaidjanis are alike in their joyous brilliance, sometimes gaudy in colour, in freedom of design, and in a taste for scenes of brutality. We can feel in their work a very strong influence from Sarian, a vigorous painter of the older generation and one of the moving spirits of the Blue Rose group, whose present work, though less audacious than that of his younger days, still holds its own against its rivals. Giulievkhian's *The Song* is a strident medley of violet and yellow, green and red (ibid., 2, 1962). *The Mountains of Georgia*, by Khuladze, borrows its fiery touches of pure colour from Van Gogh, and its lack of a sky, by eliminating the coordinates of classical space, gives the work a non-representational tendency. In the *Portrait of the composer Kara Karaev*, by Salakhov (Azerbaidjan), a piano forms a black band traversing the canvas from one end to the other, and the profile of the musician, seated with his chin on his hands, stands out vividly over it. This is a superficial audacity of lay-out, perhaps, rather than real originality, but the one may pave the way for the other. Finally, the few painters who were educated in the avant-gardist days of the twenties, but whose work has long been indistinguishable from the standard products save for a few traces invisible to an uninstructed eye, now seem to want to return to their first love. Nisski would like to see psychology and drama relegated to the cinema and the theatre, and painting relieved of them. Painting ought to express the change that has taken place in our vision of nature in the last thirty years; today we view nature 'as through the windscreen of a motor-car'. In *The Aerodrome* he gives us an unusual 'shot': the wings of an aeroplane soaring through a bright rose-coloured sky (ibid., 2, 1962). It is not very convincing, but his critics (Yoganson) are none the less reproachful of what they call 'the decorative poster solution'. Chuikov, a 'popular' artist of the Kirgiz republic, wants to learn from artists earlier than Repin—from the great Italian masters ('The Black Madonna,' *Tvorchestvo*, 5, 1962). One may think that none of this goes very far, and that painters so little

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preoccupied with the present problems of Western art are unlikely to create anything of much value. For all their archaisms, however, these artists, by the simple fact that they are situated in the same esthetic universe as our own, are bringing about, no less than are the architects and decorators, the end of the 'esthetic of the subject'. Working on the margins of socialist-realism, they help to make bearable the position of the handful of painters who insist upon living in the present day of the world of art. And will perhaps make it possible for them to be admitted to the official world of Soviet art.

TRADITIONALLY, in Russia and the USSR, the whole array of historic examples offered to the painters—that is, their museum—has presented two characteristics: It was, first of all, a classic museum according to the taste of the 19th century, one to which the estheticians of the eighteen-sixties appealed, whether they were Russian (Chernyshevsky) or Western (Taine). It was dominated by the two peak periods of Greco-Roman antiquity and the Italian cinquecento. The Apollo Belvedere and the Sistine Madonna occupied as high a position in the Russian sensibility in 1950 as they did in Dostoevsky's time, and masterpieces of these two classic periods stood in the place of honour in every great art gallery.

The Russian was also a nationalist museum. Implicitly, the universal history of art was divided into two fairly equal parts—non-Russian art and Russian art. Of the four volumes of the excellent *History of Art* by Alpatov, two are devoted to the national art. And for modern art it is understood that, from the second half of the 19th century, the only really valuable current, that of realism, was able to find full expression in Russia alone; the successors to Raphael, Rembrandt, and Delacroix, are therefore named Repin, Surikov, Serov, Grekov. Marxist ideology has taken up this theme, and integrated it with the elemental nationalism of Stasov. The modern classics of Soviet painting are almost all Russian.

But in the last few years the field of the history of art, and the museum, have been considerably enlarged, incorporating a good deal of what has entered into the museums since the beginning of the 20th century—the primitives, Negro art, the baroque, etc. *Iskusstvo* has lately published articles—well documented, although often of a rather elementary character—on Van Eyck, the drawings of Tiepolo, and the prehistoric frescoes of Tassili. *Tvorchestvo* publishes studies of the mosaics of Ravenna, on the Seicento and the Ottocento, and beautiful reproductions of Negro masks and of the Lascaux frescoes. The ostracism which formerly barred French painting from Manet to Matisse is now largely a thing of the past. Books are appearing on the Impressionists. The public are allowed to contemplate the magnificent collections that Morozov and Shchukin amassed before 1914, and, whether they read or do not read the rather ambiguous notices posted at the entrance to these galleries, they come in sufficient numbers. Above all, the ikon has been rehabilitated. Books are published on Rublev and Feofan Grek, with

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remarkable introductions by Alpatov or Lazarev. In the ancient monastery of St. Andronicus, a small but modern museum has been opened, the first, to my knowledge, that takes account of the principles of contemporary museology—the Rublev museum, devoted to the ikon. Alpatov's fine plea on behalf of Buslaev signifies not only that homage is paid to the great discoverer of medieval Russian art; it also reopens the whole question of the accepted historiography of Russian art as a whole: its centre of gravity is no longer in Repin, but in Rublev, not in Stasov but in Buslaev.

The primitives, French painting from the Impressionists to the Fauves, the ikon: to exhibit these is to reveal the sources of modern art and that of the Russian avant-garde; but the refusal to show the work that naturally follows from them persists. That is the weakness and the limitation of the Soviet museum. So rarely is anything said about the art of the twenties, that we must not fail to salute Neiman's prudent and sympathetic article upon 'monumental propaganda'—that important effort of mass education in art which was made just after the Revolution (*Iskusstvo*, 1, 1962). Neiman excuses its 'deviation' as due to revolutionary enthusiasm. He describes Tatlin's plan for a monument to the Third International, gives a photograph of the 'cubist' bust of Sophie Perovskaya by Griselli, which had to be withdrawn because of general incomprehension at the time. Now, on the other hand, works by the *Mir Iskusstva* group of painters, Vrubel and Roerich, have all acquired the freedom of the town. (Cf. the study upon a mosaic of religious inspiration by Roerich, ibid., 1, 1962.)

Upon Western art of today—complete silence. From the Russian point of view, judging by the reviews, foreign art is the sister painting of the sister republics, the 'engaged' painting in Mexico, India, or Ethiopia; the worthy sketches of Jean Effel or Hans Erni, or, again, the insignificant productions, lauded to the skies, of the type of Rockwell Kent or Renato Guttoso. True, Tsegodaev shows himself full of admiration for Maillol, who, in his eyes, incarnates all that is best in the 20th century, but no one would mention Moore, or Brancusi, or Calder, were it only to speak ill of them. The new Polish painting is ignored. Nothing appeared in *Iskusstvo* about the paintings that were a feature of the French Exhibition in 1961, although they produced something of a sensation. There was a very short report of them in *Tvorchestvo* (11, 1961): Yavorskaya refused to give any account of the abstracts, with their absurd juxtapositions of blobs of colour. She was astonished that anyone could exhibit pictures as representational when they were so remote from reality as the work of the abstracts. (Monet's work seemed abstract to the sponsors of the exhibitions of the last century.) She was willing enough to find interest in some of the pre-war works of Matisse and Picasso, in Léger's *Constructeurs* and Zadkine's *Rotterdam*. But where, she asked, were Fougeron and Taslitski, the young painters of the group 'Witnesses of our times'? (This is how representative value is ascribed

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to some isolated grouplet which then serves as a screen between the Russian public and the real art of the West.)

THE sphere of action open to painting that is alive and up to date is singularly narrow, narrower perhaps than for avant-garde music or poetry. These painters are also very isolated. For while subject painting has the support of deep and wide-spreading roots in Russia's history—and not only in its art history—this other painting can show no precedent in the recent past, except in the few years, full of set-backs, between 1907 and 1922. Almost all its immediate forerunners have emigrated, have ceased to be creative, or are dead. The succession thus very nearly broken has nevertheless been maintained by a few, of whom Falk is undoubtedly the most marvellous. Robert R. Falk was the most gifted member of the 'Knave of Diamonds' group before the Revolution, and during the twenties he was head of the Faculty of Painting and a very influential professor. Indifferent to the ups and downs of history, never deviating by an inch, he continued to pursue his art, true to the exacting principles of pure painting. During the last twenty years of his life, which were spent in his native land, he attained to a very high quality of artistic expression. He died in 1958, but his studio is a private museum which can easily be visited. Another painter, Tishler, has been working for forty years in a rather precious manner verging upon surrealism, and his art, though less reflective and perhaps less profound than Falk's, is more immediately seductive and full of poetic fantasy. If one had to suggest a Western parallel, one might name Carzou. His small, minutely painted pictures recount a fairy tale in many episodes, but always with the same magic and in the same silvery light. At Leningrad, Altman is still at work. For the young painters, these earlier masters supply the missing link with tradition; they give a universal resonance to the authentic values of Russian culture. Thanks to them, the young artists can more easily assimilate the Western influence and still remain Russian.

One is indeed surprised at the extent of their information about the West. The young painters manage somehow to procure reproductions of the most significant works of current painting. They buy, at fancy prices, the little Skira volumes sold in some of the Moscow and Leningrad bookshops. The few originals which have come their way through the recent American and French exhibitions have been passionately scrutinised. And the fact that the greater part of all this information is obtained indirectly, through reproductions which are often of poor quality, does not matter very much. After all, the art movements of earlier days were transmitted by the circulation of engravings which were inferior to our present photographs.

Whom do they admire? That varies with individuals, but the names of Klee, Miro, Bissières, Tobey, Manessier, and Arp have often been mentioned to me. However, it would be a mistake to imagine that the Russian avant-gardists' pictorial universe is filled with none but Western names. They are in revolt against a certain kind of artistic nationalism

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and protectionism, but the best of these young painters have no desire to turn Moscow into a provincial annexe of Paris or of New York. They feel Russian to the marrow of their bones; they want to inscribe their names in a tradition of Russian art, though it is true that their conception of this is unlike Gerasimov's. And this perhaps explains the interest they take, as I have noticed, in the works of certain Russian emigrés—Poliakoff, Lanskoy, Nicolas de Staël. Hence also their love of primitive peasant painting, and their sometimes fanatical veneration of ikons. A very young painter, whose productions are obtained by imprinting various objects (keys, sackcloth, rings) in plaster, reminding one of the telluric researches of Dubuffet, gravely assured me that his procedure was like that of Rublev: he did, indeed, glue his canvas to a plank of wood and then cover the whole with a preparation of plaster, but there, I thought, the resemblance ended. Hence, finally, their perpetual references to Malevich, Kandinsky, Filonov, Lisitsky, and Tatlin, whose work they go to see in special collections, sometimes in the reserves of museums, but sometimes made up of cuttings from old reviews.

I do not know whether compact groups of the kind that multiplied prior to 1917 are now being formed. I have rather the impression of a great dispersion, perhaps because the movement is so recent. But it would be surprising if this scattered but dynamic effort remained amorphous for very long, and did not coalesce around certain well-defined tendencies. The few studios I was invited to visit do not allow me to give detailed information about their works, but I was struck by the fervour and the seriousness of these young people. It is never pleasant to take up a position against established opinion, and even less so in Russia than elsewhere—a country in which there is, by tradition, a certain confusion between the ethical, the political, and the esthetic, and where the rigidity of the social structure and a low standard of living make any marginal way of life more difficult.

'Never'—a young painter said to me, using the very words of 1860—'never has the intelligentsia been so remote from the people'. Still, in spite of this feeling of isolation, the likelihood of the avant-garde painting becoming integrated with Soviet society appears to me greater than it was forty years ago. For it has already begun, at the level of the minor arts. Books for children offer an opportunity of earning a living while escaping from the set style of naturalistic rationalism: one has only to look at the fine picture-books illustrated by E. Bulatov and O. Vasilev for the 'Children's World' series (*Narisovannoe Solntse*, 1962, *Kak Neposlushnaya Khriushka edva ne sgorela*, 1961). A kind of Russian humour, tender and teasing, finds freedom to express itself in these pages meant for boys and girls. And then, the old engraver Favorsky has just made a fine come-back by illustrating the *Little Tragedies* of Pushkin (1961). Stage decoration enables some artists to get away with certain plastic experiments which would frighten exhibition committees, on the plea of scenic illusion. Such a stage setting by Tishler (reproduced

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in *Tvorchestvo*, 2, 1962), which barely suggests a fantastic landscape, is a transposition of one of his easel paintings. Lastly, the new painting, such as it is, is beginning to create its own public. The young painters themselves organise very short-lived exhibitions, which are closed after two or three days because they have neglected to apply for the legal authorisation from the Artists' Union. These are always well attended; the invitations are sent round by word of mouth. On the other hand, there is now, in the USSR, a considerable number of people enjoying substantial incomes who have also enough independence and culture to be good collectors. Authors, high officials (or their children), and scientists are taking up the tradition of the Tretiakovs, the Mamontovs, and the Shchukins. They are not so rich, however, but that painters have to find other sources of income in the applied arts. One thousand rubles for a picture is a maximum price; 300 is a good price. But this revival of patronage is, I think, a fact of capital importance. Modern societies have two kinds of cultural responsibilities; that of popularisation and that of research; and it is good for research to be protected, isolated from the outer world, as befits a process of gestation. It was the misfortune of the avant-garde of the twenties that it was obliged prematurely to leave its protected chapels and to confront full publicity and mass hostility. It was immediately shattered. But the Soviets' cultural monism, with its regressive effects, is perhaps on the way out; the new personal patronage is the germ of an autonomous cultural public which could interpose a protective screen between the public—whose education, as we have seen, is being transformed—and the new avant-garde. When this has grown and when the public has become more receptive, it will be able to come out of hiding.

* * * *

Painting in Soviet Russia, as we were saying, formed a closed system. But the entire ideological life presented the same characteristics of coherence, incommunicability, and systematisation. What is happening to painting, therefore, in this period since the 20th congress of the Party, is perhaps of the same pattern as what is taking place, more or less rapidly, in the other departments of cultural life. The old formulas are becoming empty of meaning; both the men and the doctrines are losing, not their positions, but part of their authority. Inheritors of the riches that the old intelligentsia knew how to transmit to them, a new cultural public is coming into being, very young, curious about the West, militant but at the same time prudent, armed with patience, and eager to play its part in Russian cultural history and also in the Soviet present. Though their present achievements are modest, the new painters are confident that time is on their side. Still, if the direction of evolution is not in doubt, the play of the forces that impel it could be falsified, and it is very difficult to foresee its rhythm. For on the highway of modern art in Russia the green and red lights are controlled by the State. A green light!—and

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architecture accomplishes its mutation, Matisse is admitted to the museum, an exhibition is held, a book on Feofan Grek or on Chiorlianis is published. No one can guess how important the next leap forward will be, nor when it will occur. As for the art policy of the State, it is a special case of the general (and perilous) problem of whether to maintain or to loosen social and cultural structures which have had their day.

'Moscow on Monday had its first semi-public exhibition of abstract art. It was held in a barn-like studio and lasted only one evening, but was so packed by several hundred Muscovites that it was hard to see the exhibits' (Mark Frankland in *The Observer*, 2 December 1962). According to reliable estimates there are now about four hundred painters working in this style in Moscow. On the same day a Reuter despatch from Moscow reported that Mr. Khrushchev, having visited this show, angrily denounced the abstract artists and their paintings. 'You cannot tell if they have been painted by a man's hand or smeared by a donkey's tail'. These 'pathological vagaries' were no more than 'miserable imitations of the corrupt, formalistic art of the bourgeois West'. Mr. Khruschev listened to the painters' explanations of their work, which Tass described as 'incomprehensible babble demonstrating their spiritual poverty'. The Soviet Premier then rebuked the artists, saying: 'Such work is alien to our people; they reject it'.

Mr. Khrushchev's strictures were endorsed and amplified on 3 December by articles in *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, hinting at a new campaign against 'incorrect tendencies' in the arts. The Soviet people, said *Pravda*, rejected the 'openly reactionary, anti-popular essence' of abstractionism, as well as imitations of bourgeois jazz. A 'jazz mania' had 'recently soiled several areas of our musical life' (Editor's note).

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THE SOUND OF NEW MUSIC

Fred K. Prieberg

SOVIET composers are currently groping their way along the arduous path between official esthetic and personal inclination. They may occasionally have to face a crisis of conscience. The delicacy of their position can be gauged by the fact that the celebrated Soviet music critic and historian Yuri Kremlev has declared in one of his works—in all seriousness, though not without contradiction—that even works from Beethoven's last creative period fail to merit general acceptance.

It is obvious that the problem confronting Soviet composers is principally one of education. To solve it, granted that it is capable of solution, will take a long time—several decades at least. Music as a medium of popular political enlightenment is an integral part of the ideological structure of the State. It has an accepted function, and it is this function which determines its standard. There are, of course, no grounds for assuming that its standard is immutably and permanently fixed. It could be raised considerably—certainly far above the present petit-bourgeois level of taste—though it is scarcely necessary to point out that it cannot be raised too quickly. Music which bore the most remote resemblance to that heard on the BBC Third Programme would provoke serious disquiet among Russian listeners. The Soviet Union possesses an elite endowed with good taste and a high degree of musical cultivation, an elite which is passionately interested in what is happening outside the country in the musical sphere. At the other end of the scale there are the masses, who love music but are not well-versed in the subject.

There is no doubt that official speeches and articles paint a far too rosy picture of Soviet Russia as a musical country. One is dissuaded from over-rating educational successes and the general standard of musical life not only by reiterated exhortations to step up 'musical propaganda' but also by frequent complaints about deficiencies in the repertoire of recorded music,[1] the meagre output of sheet-music,[2] and the inadequate quality and quantity of musical instruments.[3] It is true that the Soviet Union boasts an abundance of conservatoires, music schools, children's music schools, and evening music schools, but a comparison with the number of copies of works on musical instruction and the number of instrumental schools in existence indicates a marked

[1] Cf. 'Gramofonnaya plastinka', *Sovetskaya Muzika*, August 1953; 'O gramofonnoi plastinke', ibid. February 1955, May 1955; 'O tekhnicheskom kachestve plastinok', ibid. May 1955; 'Prodolzhaem razgovor o plastinke', ibid. June 1955.

[2] Cf. A. Goltsman, 'Ob izdanii i rasprostranenii not', *S.M.*, October 1958.

[3] Cf. V. Artemov in *S.M.*, September 1954; A. Doroshkin, 'O sostoyanii russkikh narodnykh orkestrov', ibid. July 1957; D. Vladimirova, 'Ot kuda prikhodit liubov k muzike?', *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 27 March 1962.

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discrepancy between claims and achievements. What is more, Russian musical training concentrates entirely on promoting a romantic conception and interpretation of music; not on arousing pleasure in music *per se* but on the comprehension of some sort of '*content*' suggested by title or text.

Soviet composers know what is expected of them. They realise that communist indoctrination of the workers will not be furthered by twelve-tone music and the 'far-out' noises of the Western avant-garde. To write a song of triumph about space-travellers in the style of Schönberg's middle period would strike them as absurd. If a cosmonaut's hymn is to have any effect it must have a familiar ring, e.g.:

Now is the miracle accomplished:
roaring forth into the sky like a needle,
the precious star-rocket has
returned from cosmic flight,
opening, with its bold impetus,
the doors of the new era.
In it, explorer of the Universe,
flies Soviet man.
With this unprecedented flight
man has come of age
in the chill depths of interplanetary space.
The son of the great Soviet homeland
is blazing trails
to the stars for mankind.
With this unprecedented flight
man has come of age . . .
Son of the great Soviet homeland.

This is one of many examples of the musical homage accorded to the heroes of Soviet space-flight.[4] That its lyrics and musical style are high-flown goes without saying. It strives for effect and its tone is romantic and grandiose—but its composer, Sigismund Katz, has been defeated by the special nature of his artistic problem. His melodies are not instinct with anything new or extraordinary. The cosmonauts were hurled into the void, but Katz's music remains earthbound. It betrays absolutely no suggestion of the hot breath of adventure or of man's technological achievements. Instead, it falls plump into the quagmire of everyday existence—and could hardly do otherwise, for 'socialist realism' as decreed by Stalin thirty years ago is incapable of matching the technical innovation of space-flight with a corresponding technical innovation of musical style. Consequently, the theme and its artistic treatment fall apart at the seams. Fierce controversy has broken out in Soviet cultural publications on just this subject and, in particular, on the form of modern opera:

[4] Published under the title, 'Syn velikoi sovetskoi zemli', *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 10 August 1961.

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> Seek! That is the composer's order of the day. Seek, and the more boldly the better! Not in the old operatic repertoire, however, but in life, in its new forms, new modes, relationships, contrasts, sounds. We now look indulgently upon the mock passion of the unnatural heroes of the sentimental, romantic operas. We laugh at the 'logic' with which the hero of *Trovatore* behaves, but we justify this spuriousness and affectation as a symptom of changing times and accept such heroes as an inevitable accompaniment of the operas of years gone by. Nevertheless, contemporary art cannot model itself on so 'implausible' a portrayal of human beings. The man of our own day cannot be fitted into the dramatis personae even of the best classical operas. He is a man of another era, of another system of thought, another rhythm of existence. We cannot today write exalted odes on the flight of our cosmonauts. We cannot depict a parade of ballistic missiles in the medium of the ikon painter. How, then, can we portray contemporary men on the stage of an opera house with techniques which were devised two hundred years ago in order to hymn the praises of social lions and the 'sublime' amours of monarchs? [5]

This assertion illumines only one facet in the great controversy to which the condemnation of Stalin at the 22nd CPSU congress in Moscow added fresh fuel. The detrimental effect on music of the Stalinist personality-cult was debated as early as 1956, though not pursued to its logical conclusion. The dogma of 'socialist realism' has remained in force, and the far from unanimous attitude towards the Stalin era is reflected in musical literature. Either authors omit all mention of, say, the Stalin Prizes for composition and musicianship,[6] or they skirt the subject with a prudence verging on hysteria. For example:

> As early as 1925 the Soviet Government instituted a Lenin Prize for the encouragement of those engaged in scientific work. It was awarded to a number of the fatherland's greatest scholars. For a long period from 1935 onwards, however, no award was made. In 1956 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Council of Ministers of the USSR passed a resolution on the reinstatement of the Lenin Prize.[7]

By contrast, T. Khrennikov gave the following warning at the Second All-Union congress of Soviet composers:

> Nor should we exclude from our artistic treasury works associated with the name of J. V. Stalin: as, for example, Khachaturian's *Poem on Stalin*, the Stalin Cantatas by Alexandrov and Prokofiev (*Zdravitsa*), and the Stalin songs by Revutsky, Blanter, and other composers, works which sprang from a sincere sense of patriotism and love for the socialist homeland.[8]

[5] G. Anissimov, 'Smelost poiskov', *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 23 September 1961.
[6] Cf. G. Bernandt in *Sovetskie kompository: kratki biograficheski spravochnik* (Moscow, 1957).
[7] V. Bogdanov-Berezovski in the foreword to *Sovetskie kompository—laureaty Leninskoi premii* (Leningrad, 1961).
[8] *Kunst und Literatur*, June 1957, p. 645.

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Some of the above-named works can be heard on Radio Moscow from time to time. In general, however, efforts are being directed not towards the restoration of the past but towards nothing more nor less than a modernisation of Soviet art. One thing is certain: if that art is to be genuinely true to life, if it is to be 'socialist-realist' in the true sense of the term, it must free itself from the bourgeois-Biedermeier style. That is why people have begun to speak so openly in Russia about the defects of musical life. To quote Shostakovich at the second meeting of the Composers' Association in May 1961:

> There must be a bold quest for novelty in the future, too, for without creative inquiry there is no true art and without renewal of artistic media there is no possibility of incorporating the new elements which our era, that of the building of communism, brings forth day by day. All that matters is that the new should not be built on shifting sands but organically linked with objective reality and endowed with a national foundation.

This excerpt sums up the dilemma of Soviet music in a few sentences. On the one hand, there is need for a 'bold quest'—a phrase which has since become a phenomenological term; on the other, 'the new' should be rooted in national soil. It is evident from this that the adoption of Western stylistic media would bring no relief, however suitable they might be—e.g. for symbolising the technological achievement of space-flight plausibly by electronic means. Shostakovich himself has recently made repeated efforts—discounting his politically motivated symphonies—to find a synthesis, and he is not alone. New names have appeared and new ideas are circulating in the Soviet Union. There is Georgi Sviridov (b. 1915), every bar of whose work betrays the fact that Carl Orff is winning adherents in Moscow. Sviridov's *Pathetic Oratorio*, a cautious application of Orffesque stylistic methods and musical principles to some words by Maiakovsky, won him the Lenin Prize in 1961. Is this 'the new' as envisaged in the USSR? Is this to be the much talked of 'middle way'?

MEANWHILE some altogether different developments are afoot, though of an unofficial nature, as may be inferred from the intensified campaign against modern Western music. Compositions by Pierre Boulez, Karlheinz Stockhausen, and Luciano Berlio have been branded as 'music against man'.[9] This trend was critically summed up by the Soviet Minister of Culture in her report to the 22nd CPSU congress in October 1961, which, it is fair to assume, was intended as a warning to Soviet artists not to adopt Western stylistic methods too indiscriminately. Mme Furtseva said:

[9] G. Shneerson, 'Muzika protiv cheloveka', *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 10 October 1961.

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> As for the bourgeoisie and their ideologists, they are no longer in a position to produce ideas capable of attracting their masses. Anti-communism and renascent fascism are now providing the imperialist reactionaries with their basic weapons. In defending the capitalist front, the bourgeoisie are exploiting all available media for purposes of anti-communist propaganda, hatred, and war propaganda: wireless, television, theatre, cinema, and the graphic arts. Hence the appearance in the West of works in which irresponsibility and lack of restraint in human behaviour are vindicated as symptoms of the world's tragic disorder, from which abstract painting and 'formless' music receive their stimulus.[10]

To the Russian, this sounds self-evident. Having no free access to information, he has to rely on commentaries in his own publications. He is bogged down in habits of thought which leave him blind to the true role of the avant-garde in capitalist society. He regards the avant-garde as a product of the system, whereas it really embraces only a small minority of the artists of today, with their multiplicity of styles. It is typical only in so far as its existence depends upon the freedom of art from political pressure.

It seems scarcely credible, even to so distinguished a literary man and intellectual as the Soviet musicologist, Grigori Shneerson, that—as he wrote some time ago [11]—composers such as Stockhausen and Boulez are indirectly levelling criticism at their own society, that they are outsiders and nonconformists who receive no particular official encouragement. Shneerson has asserted that their music expresses nothing. True, it has no anti-fascist title or anti-capitalist text, but its very existence and nature make it the symbol of a spiritual and social situation. Their compositions are a protest. But once a Russian admitted that fact, once he contemplated the possibility of a demonstration by artists directed inwards, against their own milieu, he would be inextricably lost in an ideological maze. What, in such circumstances, would be the significance of twelve-tone music in the USSR?

Twelve-tone music in the Soviet Union? There is none, Shostakovich assured an interviewer in Los Angeles.[12] That was in 1959. Now that esthetic matters are being debated more openly, however, we know that a whole series of young composers in Leningrad, Moscow, and other centres are not only composing in the twelve-tone manner but are performing their works. Many of them are cautious, some declining to reveal their identity and others refusing to send scores abroad to the West, but even outré works by Western composers are now being performed and discussed by an ever-widening circle of interested parties. One well-known woman pianist has played Anton Webern's *Variations* (Opus 27) at a public performance in the Leningrad Philharmonic recital hall. She is now studying compositions by Stockhausen and Boulez.

[10] *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 21 October 1961.
[11] Letter to the writer, 2 November 1961.
[12] *Musical America*, 1 December 1959, p. 6.

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During the 1961–62 season the Leningrad Philarmonic performed Alban Berg's violin concerto. All this is happening unofficially, as it were, and is the outcome of arguments between leading personalities in Russian musical life and programme committees or cultural officials. While the authorities take hardly any notice of it, the press occasionally gives vent to reservations of varying severity.

Nevertheless, the first 'modern' pieces (in our sense of the word) by Soviet composers have now reached the West and been performed there—unobtrusively, though, because too much fuss might engender a 'Pasternak effect'. At least one of these young composers is a genuine discovery. Valentin Sylvestrov is the leading light of a musical coterie in Kiev, and his works include a violin sonata and piano variations (both written in 1958), a piano trio (1959), a piano sonata (1960), five piano pieces, a piano quintet and four 'Signs' for piano (all 1961). His most recent compositions owe an obvious debt to the Schönberg of circa 1925, but this stimulus is so unmistakably animated and intensified by something of his own that we are entitled to speak not only of a Russian twelve-tone style but of a distinct personal idiom. One musicologist has written of the quintet:

> After a lively initial twelve-tone theme the viola strikes up a tuneful melody in F minor, to which a succession of fourths adds bright and vivid colour. Out of these two contrasting themes are constructed three parts of the work: prelude, fugue, and air. The composer has thus controlled both his musical material and its development, and this thematic coherence welds all parts of the composition into an integral whole. The style of the quintet is highly polyphonic, with striking rhythmic variety and contrast between the separate melodic lines.[13]

The four 'Signs' are idylls of an utterly unromantic kind, brief, pregnant, and pellucid. They possess an aphoristic quality. Each of these short pieces has a compositorial 'point', and none has anything in common with Tchaikovsky's broad symphonic sweep or Khachaturian's folkloristic pathos. The five piano pieces—*Preludio*, *Toccatina*, *Melodia*, *Chorale*, and *La Sonatina Sospesa*—form an extremely succinct and tense little suite, composed in the twelve-tone manner and modelled on Schönberg, it is true, but far from pedantic and imbued with a very personal, almost 'Russian' *espressivo*.

OFFICIAL publications on music in the Soviet Union are entirely devoid of any hint as to the existence of such pieces, even though there is good reason to be proud of the talent that gave birth to them. A professor of music in some town or other may tell someone that there are two young people in his composition class who compose chromatically. . . . It sounds harmless enough—after all, even Khachaturian likes to

[13] Halina Mokrejewa, 'List z Kijowa', *Ruch Muzyczny*, 1 May 1962.

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compose chromatically—but the experienced listener realises what special kind of chromatic composition the professor has in mind, namely dodecaphony. This exists, too, and one young composer has steeped himself so thoroughly in Western stylistic media that he has succeeded in evolving a style of his own. I am referring to Andrei Volkonsky. He did not, of course, enter the Soviet Union empty-handed when he arrived there in 1948. Born of Russian parents in Geneva in 1933, he attended the Paris Conservatoire between 1944 and 1947. What he learned in Dinu Lipatti's piano class and Nadia Boulanger's composition class naturally left its mark, but it was a Rumanian of Jewish stock named Hershkovitch, an ex-pupil of Webern living in Moscow, who initiated Volkonsky into twelve-tone composition with the aid of Leibowitz's *Introduction à la musique de douze sons*. Volkonsky's recent works are *Musica Stricta* (1957) for piano, *Music for twelve instruments* (1958), *Serenade of the Insects* for orchestra, the *Mirror Suite* (1961), set to words by García Lorca and scored for soprano, organ, guitar, violin, flute, and percussion, and several electronic scores for screen and stage. He is now engaged on *Scenes from the Age of Chivalry*, an operetta with a libretto written by himself.

Volkonsky is a member of the Soviet Composers' Association, but his activities are regarded as incompatible with the artistic policy of that body. As the Secretary of the Association wrote bitterly:

> Today youth shows promise and gives pleasure; tomorrow it stands at the helm of Soviet art. It is therefore depressing and, though rare, a distressing frustration of creative effort when one of the younger generation allows himself to be carried away by modern bourgeois trends, by twelve-tone music; when he 'experiments' in the mire, floundering in a morass of defunct dogmas and schemata. *Musica Stricta*, by the talented young composer A. Volkonsky, affords the listener no pleasure because it dwells with excessive tedium on the dismal atmosphere of hopeless modernistic 'searching'. While Volkonsky's work is merely a disagreeable and, in general, isolated blunder—though encouraged by undoubted successes—it finds no favour with us.[14]

A few days later the national radio network broadcast a recital which Volkonsky—a talented pianist and organist—gave in the auditorium of the Gniessin Institute. Apparently, criticism from such an authoritative source does not necessarily entail a boycott as well. This may in itself be an indication of a new trend in cultural policy which could culminate in the gradual acceptance of things new. There is no curbing the intellectual activity of these young composers; they are already too numerous for that. Working in Moscow in addition to Volkonsky is Eddison Denissov (b. 1929), tutor in analysis of musical forms at the Conservatoire and a twelve-tone exponent since summer 1960, as his subsequent works

[14] S. Aksiuk in *Sovetskaya Kultura*, 4 November 1961.

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reveal, e.g. his piano variations and music for eleven wind instruments and kettle-drum.

In Kiev, besides Sylvestrov, there are Vladimir Guba and Leonid Grabovsky, whose preoccupations with twelve-tone technique is founded on Hans Jelinek's *Anleitung zur Zwölftonkomposition*, sent to them by the author himself. Vitali Patsera, a fourth composer from Kiev who studied composition under Professor Dankevich at the Conservatoire, is currently engaged in evolving his own approach to an atonal system. In Lvov, the young composer A. Nikodemovich has begun to study Jelinek's manual. News from Leningrad is sparse, but it is certain that at least one composer is writing dodecaphonic music there. At the Tallinn Conservatoire (Estonia), Professor Heino Eller has used Ernst Krenek's studies in counterpoint as an instructional book. Those who have studied the technique of dodecaphonic composition under him include Kh. Yurissalu, Ya. Ryayats, and Arvo Piart.

Naturally, the salvation of music does not lie in dodecaphony, but Russian twelve-tone music proves that the isolation of creative forces is not a permanency. People discuss artistic developments in the West, but discussion is not enough for them. They seek ways of their own. In the circumstances, it is not quite so difficult to forecast further developments as may appear. The Russians already accept Hindemith, Francis Poulenc, Darius Milhaud, Luigi Dallapiccola, Frank Martin, and other prominent figures in contemporary Western music. They describe them as ' progressive ', which makes things easier. Where it is impossible to claim that a composer's approach is ' progressive ' in the Russian sense, programme notes and broadcast introductions omit to supply all the available details about a piece, with the result that even Honegger's *Liturgical Symphony* and sundry organ works by Messiaen can be heard in the USSR.

Finally, Stravinsky himself has paid a visit—the first—to his former home, and Russian newspapers are crammed with reports of his concerts. People will now have to come to terms with the awkward fact that his latest compositions are atonal. Once that is accepted the Soviet Union will have gained the most considerable figure in contemporary music, just as it gained Prokofiev thirty years ago. Bound up with this acceptance is an educational task of the first magnitude and the no less difficult ideological task of reinterpreting ' socialist realism ' so that it can accommodate more than it has done hitherto. This, however, is a question of tactics. The first performance of Shostakovich's Fourth Symphony at the end of 1961 marked the first step towards overcoming the past. It appears likely that the Soviet Union's musical policy will, in years to come, develop a resemblance to the present state of affairs in Poland, which could be a great deal worse.

Thus the young avant-garde composers of the USSR have an important function, for they may well provide the soil in which a more liberal esthetic education and musical policy can grow.

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REVIVAL OF THE CINEMA

Hilmar Hoffmann

PUDOVKIN'S prophecy, uttered in 1949, that 'socialist-realism is just as immortal, as eternally young and inexhaustible as the people itself', was confounded ten years later by such films as Kalatosov's *The Cranes are Flying* and Chukhrai's *Ballad of a Soldier*. 'The collective, positive figure of the Soviet hero'—in other words, the depersonalised human being who had been given an interchangeable face and degraded into a vehicle for ideology—disappeared during the post-Stalinist era. Once his permanent and pervasive presence had been dispensed with, cinematic art was gradually enabled to resume its development on the Moskva and in Leningrad. The 'picture of the perfect man' as formulated by Pudovkin in his capacity as a film historian no longer coincides exactly with 'the picture of the perfect communist' as exemplified by Ermler in *The Great Patriot* (1938–9), or by Mikhail Romm in *The Russian Question* (1948), or by Gerasimov in *The Young Guard* (also 1948)—entirely in the 'spirit of partisanship' and with 'a clear understanding of the creativeness of the Soviet people on its way to communism'.

Five years after Pudovkin's 'definitive' pronouncements, shortly after Stalin's death, and seven years before the official spring-cleaning which took place at the 22nd Soviet Communist Party congress, Mikhail Kalatosov's sixth film, *Three Men on a Raft* (1954), first cast doubt on the infallibility of prevailing theories. Kalatosov discovered negative sides to the 'positive' heroes reproduced by the rubber stamp of socialist-realism. A senior official in Moscow's municipal government is portrayed not as a friend of his fellow-citizens but as a dictatorial grouser who has lost the common touch during his years of service with the party. While touring flooded areas by raft with two friends, the crusty civil servant is re-equipped for political life not by socialist slogans but by a combination of intellectual massage and scenic beauty.

During the fifties, once they had paid their cinematic tribute to national sentiment, film-makers like Kozintsev, Gerasimov and Yutkevich produced films worthy of the name of art. Following their example, a whole succession of Soviet authors and producers pounced upon works by foreign and Russian writers, notably Chekhov, Tolstoy, and even Dostoevsky, whose material provided them with latent opportunities to refurbish the rusty criteria governing individual human destiny—though not, for the time being, without making allusions to the socialist present. Sergei Yutkevich's imposing *Othello* (1955) and Grigory Kozintsev's *Don Quixote* (1956) made it possible to lend psychological depth to tragic heroes who had no place in the codex of socialist-realism, free from the schematism peculiar to class-bound 'optimistic' dramaturgy. The censor passed these and sundry other literary themes because they left the taboo of the lack of conflict within Soviet society unimpugned. It

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was during this period that Sergei Gerasimov made the trilogy *Quiet Flows the Don* (1956–58), the first part of which permitted its characters an individual personality. Mikhail Romm and Kozintsev remained silent from 1956 until recently, but Kozintsev is now working on a film of *Hamlet* and Romm received the Grand Prix at Karlsbad in 1962, evidently for the artistic self-transformation which, to the surprise of all Romm-connoisseurs, he demonstrated in *Nine Days of the Year*. To quote him: 'For me, this film is a fresh start—from scratch.'

In *Nine Days of the Year*, whose original title *I Journey into the Unknown* allows inferences to be made about a nonconformist dénouement utterly alien to the tenets of socialist-realism, Soviet scientists startle us with personal ideas which are unprovided for by the party catechism and expressed in a manner reminiscent of Proust or Valéry, e.g. 'Only the wise are in advance of their time: the mediocre live in it.' The intellectual from the Siberian atomic power station, played with a hint of Western decadence and ironic scepticism by the actor Innokenti Smoktunovsky, turns out to be a more positive member of society than the star physicist from the Moscow nuclear laboratory. While *Pravda* fulminated about 'destructive tendencies', *Izvestia*, edited by Khrushchev's son-in-law, applauded Romm's efforts to liberalise the Soviet cinema.

This modern, entirely unconventional, psychologically tortuous drama is the sort of thing that might have been expected from a young graduate of the Moscow film academy, not from a seasoned veteran like Mikhail Romm. Not more than ten years ago, this Stalin Prize-winner declared that 'the straight and narrow path of unadulterated ideological propaganda' must be preferred to 'psychological niceties or formal-esthetic refinements'. He condemned those of his comrades who had not weaned themselves from 'alien Western influences', because these were all 'elements of bourgeois taste'. Be that as it may, Romm is undoubtedly responsible for the most 'Western' film of the new era. Many have compared the esthetic structure of his dialogue with that of Antonioni, though Romm has hope rather than resignation to offer.

THE period between Kalatosov's *Three Men on a Raft* and Romm's *Nine Days*, i.e. between 1954 and 1962, will have to be classified as the second great phase in the history of Russian cinema, and it looks as if those eight years have been only a prelude. Credit for the rehabilitation of the individual goes first to Kalatosov, whose *The Cranes are Flying* (1957) won the Grand Prix de Cannes and has been widely shown in the West. In it, he is less concerned with the glorification of war and the Soviet hero than with the behaviour of Russians in exceptional situations. He no longer extols war as the great opportunity for socialism to prove itself. When Young Pioneers present a doctor with parcels adorned with communist slogans, Kalatosov makes him react irritably. War is painted as the inexorable destroyer of mankind, of family life and human relations. The fate of the individual is becoming important, the intimacy of

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private and personal life sacrosanct once more. Dovzhenko's thesis, proclaimed during the Stalin era, that 'private life finds expression in public life, which is inseparably linked with the life of the country and its historic destiny', seems to have been superseded.

What applies to *Cranes* applies equally to *Ballad of a Soldier* (1960) by the Ukrainian director Grigory Chukhrai. The chief character in this film is not a hero until made so by fear, an emotion from which celluloid Red Army men have always been immune hitherto. The film describes the life and death of a soldier with a childlike face, an Odyssey which the author uses to illustrate chaos and dissolution, demoralisation, corruption and adultery. It is a clean, humanistic piece of work.

Chukhrai set himself an awkward task with his earliest film, *The Forty-First* (1956). Cut off on an island in the Aral Sea, a woman revolutionary falls in love with a White Russian officer whom she has wounded, only to see him become her forty-first victim. The camera leaves her weeping on her knees beside him. Chukhrai does not treat the theme of revolution in epic fashion but reduces it to terms of human conflict, demonstrating that the class-struggle is not a mathematical phenomenon governed by the laws of arithmetic.

Vladimir Fetin is another film-maker whose test piece, *The Foal* (1960), which won a prize in West Germany, is set against a background of conflict between Red and White. This short film shows both sides in a sympathetic light by stressing their common love of animals. Searching for its mother, the foal trots back and forth, symbolically, as it were, between the lines, as if unable to decide on either. It is a White guardsman who eventually succumbs while trying to save the beast from drowning.

One milestone on the road that led to freedom from stylised heroics and finally set the seal on the artistic doctrines of Zhdanov, Stalin's plenipotentiary in esthetic matters, was Sergei Bondarchuk's *A Man's Destiny* (1959), based on a short story by Sholokhov. As W. Berghahn remarked of this film in *Merkur*: '"Why has life treated me so badly?" asks the leading character. This is the film's main theme, and the question is left unanswered. The fact that he survives the war appears to be purely accidental. His family dies in an air-raid, his son in battle. He returns to find nothing left but rubble, misery, and incomprehension. That, the film tells us, is not the fate of an individual; it is the fate of mankind in general. Ideology is not enough for the individual victim.'

Chukhrai's latest film, *Clear Skies* (1961), calls Stalin to account more harshly than ever before. When the whispered words 'Stalin is dead' came over the sound-track at its first performance in the Rossiya Cinema during the Moscow Film Festival of 1961, the packed auditorium responded with frenzied applause. The film seeks to rehabilitate Soviet prisoners of war, proscribed under Stalin, not only as heroes but as individuals with a full claim to humanitarian treatment. The dictator is represented by a more than life-size plaster figure which presides over the interrogations conducted in the modest little government office. The

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erstwhile air-force officer who turns into an unemployed alcoholic stands as an accusatory symbol of the fate of many citizens who were deprived of their civic rights in the Stalin era. The film acted as a cinematic dress rehearsal for Stalin's official dethronement from the pedestal of the personality cult a few months later. It is less formally consistent than Chukhrai's earlier works and full of over-obtrusive symbolism. The thaw that sets in after Stalin's death is dwelt on in too much detail, reminding one of a similar device used by Pudovkin in *Mother* (1926).

RECENT works of varying quality imply that society is by no means perfect, indeed, that it lacks the ability to assimilate new developments. In *A Man is Born* (1957), Vassili Ordynsky castigates socialist society for spurning a girl student with an illegitimate child, painting a far from rosy picture of working conditions and inadequate welfare services. *The House I Live in* (1957), a gloomy film by Lev Kulidzhanov and Yakov Segel, illustrates how housing difficulties can lead people to blunder or come to grief—though not without attributing a good deal of the blame for their failure to the people themselves. Dealing episodically with various tenants in an apartment house, the film is expressly orientated towards the fate of the individual and affords a sectional view of Soviet society in which no attempt is made to disguise the presence of human failings such as venality, drunkenness, and moral disintegration. The more people subscribe to the view that socialism is not a nursemaid to whose hand a man can cling throughout his sheltered life, the greater the emphasis that falls upon the personal responsibility of the individual.

That party membership or a good-natured proletarian face do not in themselves constitute a guarantee of morally unobjectionable behaviour is something which Oganesyan and Skubin sought to prove with particular force in *Krosh's Adventure* (1961) and *Cruelty* (1959). The instructor in *Krosh's Adventure*, an atmospherically accurate film about gymnasts, is revealed as a rogue and a quarrelsome fellow but a friend of the young. In *Cruelty*, Vladimir Skubin makes a member of the communist security police refuse to honour a pledge, thereby helping to cause a suicide. In *The Rumyantsev Case* (1956) by Yossif Kheifits, director of *The Lady with the Dog* (1960), a public prosecutor gets an innocent man convicted of theft, regarding him as a cipher rather than an individual. Kheifits rams home the lesson by ascribing the young man's release not to the natural course of justice but to the exonerating testimony of a friend—in other words, to mere chance. A particularly surprising feature of the film is its admission of latent juvenile delinquency.

To round off our picture of the new creative phase in Soviet film-making, mention must be made of several no less typical works such as *The Letter that never came* (1959) by Kalatosov, *Seryozha* (1960) by Georgi Danelya and Igor Talakin, *Cradle-Song* (1960) by M. Kalik, the wholly personal *Aloshka's Love* (1960) by S. Tumanov and G. Shchekin, and the episodic film *Heroes of the Day* (1960), made by a team of young Baltic and Belo-Russian directors. Finally, there is the sensation of the

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1962 Biennale, *Ivan's Childhood* (1962), an impressive and poetic indictment of war by Andrei Tarkovsky, pupil of Romm, socialist-realism's most celebrated apostate. It is the story of a twelve-year-old orphan, partly told in dramatically justified dream sequences. The alternate reactions of the child and the two officers in the fox-hole are psychologically accurate and entirely credible, but the documentary emphasis on the battle for Berlin is a glaring stylistic flaw.

The dramatic construction of these films is free from schematism and obeys individual impulses. They are no longer dedicated to the party or its offshoots, but to humanity. Human beings treat one another like individuals, not collective symbols, and the cliché of 'the Soviet man' has been melted down. Characterised by an infectiously humanistic quality, the films of the new phase reveal a mastery of form and a convincing human content.

When we note that the rebirth of the individual is being accompanied by formal innovations in Russian film-making and that it is again possible not only to subject situations and circumstances to penetrating scrutiny but also, occasionally, to couple an exclamation mark with a query, we should add that criticism may only be levelled at middle- or lower-ranking officials. Even today, it is still impossible to call in question or present an analysis of the system itself, the party or state as a whole. It should also be noted that of the directors responsible for the sixty-odd feature films produced annually in the studios of Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Riga, etc., the majority are still proceeding at the same old socialist-realist jog-trot as though Kalatosov, Chukhrai, or Bondarchuk were only phantasmagoric or had never existed.

POLAND is a different story. Socialist-realism has remained alien to most Polish directors—though they have had to adapt it for their own use to a certain degree—and was so even before the so-called 'springtime' of the Polish cinema arrived in 1956. This is illustrated by works of such artistic and thematic importance as *Border Street* (1948), an epic account of the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto, and *Five Boys from Barska Street* (1954), a story about juvenile delinquents, both by the veteran director Alexander Ford, the Auschwitz film *The Final Stage* (1948) by Wanda Yakubowska, and *Generation* (1955), Andrzej Wajda's dramatic story of the Resistance.

The Polish intellectual was able to preserve a measure of critical detachment over the years, girding himself for the moment of spiritual awakening in a sort of creative vacuum. What the student magazine *Po Prostu* or the weekly *Nowa Kultura* was to 'revisionist' authors such as the philosopher Leszek Kolakowski, Bossak's documentary film studio in Warsaw was to the makers of documentary films. Released from prison in 1956, like Gomulka, Jerzy Bossak presided over the birth of what later became known as the 'black series', documentaries which presented a critical analysis of abuses in the new Poland.

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Gomulka's official rehabilitation in 1956 was accompanied by a complete re-emancipation of the screen individual, a process hastened by the fact that the new order had never managed to eradicate it entirely. It seems only natural, therefore, that the first feature film which ventured to pillory party doctrines and official abuses with relentless candour should have restated the value of the human personality. The railwayman Orzechowski in Andrzej Munk's *Man on the Line* (1956), who grumbles about over-zealous officials, risks his life to save a crowded train from derailment. He dies for the society whose system has compulsorily retired him for alleged sabotage. After it has taken this sacrifice to prove that someone can be a good citizen of the state even when he dislikes many of its features, the local party offices are aired with the words ' It's stuffy in here '—a sentence which disposed of the whole of the Stalin era in one breath, months before the ' thaw ' of October 1956.

The Poles are innately nonconformist, though their relish for opposition does not extend to a demand for the abolition of their system. Instead, native artists try to mint communism into Polish coin, in other words, to draw its teeth politically or revalue it socially. The results have been extremely meagre from the artistic point of view, but for a large number of authors and directors the remodelling of communism has also meant criticising communism from the social aspect or breaking certain taboos. Because such films have achieved success at international festivals, foreigners have felt confirmed in their assumption that the Polish attitude to life expresses itself in unrelieved pessimism. Thanks to the work of front-rank Polish directors like Kawalerowicz, Munk, Has, and Wajda, negation has, as it were, been artistically legitimised.

The Real End of the Great War (1957) and *The Noose* (1958) are entirely dictated by the dramaturgy of despair. Their depressive effect is all the greater because, though psychologically plausible, they see suicide as the only means of escape from chaos: in the case of Jerzy Kawalerowicz because a man mentally affected by the war seeks to escape responsibility by silence or apathetic concurrence, and in the case of Wojciech Has because alcoholism has transformed an artist into a wreck. Czesław Petelski's *Suicide Squad* (1958), based, like Has' film, on a scenario by Marek Hlasko, is no less hopeless in outlook. Among the sequences which had to be cut was a discussion between a communist and a believer, each of whom has strayed from his faith. *The Eighth Day of the Week* (1957), based on a theme by the same author and produced in association with a West Berlin group, was not allowed to be shown in Poland because of its outspoken pessimism. All these films portray suffering without offering any active sympathy. In them, man is alone at the most decisive moments of his life.

Annual production figures clearly reveal that the period of the so-called ' thaw ', i.e. the years 1955–58, were particularly rich in films which criticised social conditions, and this cinematic outburst of social criticism often had a cathartic effect. Paradoxically, these films appeared

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at a time when the process of liberalisation had already engendered perceptible improvements—not to say hope for the future.

Another film to appear during this 'stock-taking' phase was Wajda's *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958), a cinematic requiem for the lost generation. This was an attempt to rehabilitate the non-communists in the Polish Resistance, a theme broached some years before by Roman Bratny in a trilogy of novels entitled *Columbus, Age-Group 1920*. Because Wajda confines the conflict between Nationalists and Communists to the plane of personal destiny, this film, too, is depressing. Exponents of conflicting political views become 'victims of their illusions' and human life is subjectively devalued by a dénouement in which the representative of the war-time generation dies symbolically on a rubbish dump. 'And who knows . . . there may be a diamond left under the ashes—the dawn of eternal victory'. This film has been interpreted as a parable on Poland's equivocal position between East and West.

There is an increasing tendency to invest war and Resistance themes with an allegorical function. In *All Saints' Day* (1962), Tadeusz Konwicki presents the events of the time in retrospect as an analysis of lost and irrecoverable human relationships. People no longer understand one another and are too weary to make any serious attempt to do so. Instead of venturing an optimistic note, Konwicki, like many of his young colleagues, seeks refuge in resignation.

In *Kanal* (1956) or *Lotna* (1959) this was legitimate, for there Wajda combined human tragedy with national drama. Rebels fight in the sewers of Warsaw without hope of survival and Polish cavalrymen charge German tanks at the Battle of Lotna, their anachronistic weapons a symbol of despair. While *Lotna* is peopled with faceless cannon-fodder, Wajda gives each individual in *Kanal* a personal profile. Not all are heroes, and the external projection of their fears affords the audience a chance of self-identification. The spirit of resignation is more valid in these two films than in many others made across the border, not only because they attempt to fulfil a documentary purpose but because events unroll without the individual's being able to influence their course.

Kawalerowicz's intimate *Night Train* (1959) and Wajda's *Innocent Magicians* (1960) both lend artistic substance to the picture of the contemporary Pole as a being competent to pass judgment, prone to scepticism, and not infrequently lonely. A more humorous note can now be heard, and irony has ceased to be merely self-tormenting—indeed, it is often pressed into the service of a more positive outlook. The seemingly existentialist-eccentric magicians are not Wajda's creatures—or only to the extent that they proclaim the bankruptcy of man's capacity for love. Andrzej Munk, too, employs irony as a stylistic element in *Cross-Eyed Happiness* (1960), in which a sort of Polish Candide strains every nerve to adapt himself and exploit his advantages. Certain

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parallels emerge, for the scenario is by the author of *Kanal*, Jerzy Stawinski, who also handled *Eroica*.

Like *Ashes and Diamonds*, *Eroica* (1958) is testimony to the artistry of Polish film-makers. Representative of the ambitious activity that is going on in the film studios of Warsaw, Lodz and Breslau, it shows why Polish films have become international to the extent that they have remained specifically Polish. The fate of the Polish nation and the Polish individual arouses interest in New York, Berlin, or Moscow because the Poles have succeeded in translating national sentiments to the international plane. *Eroica*—the title is ironic—describes a perilous and involuntary excursion into the Resistance by an average unpatriotic individual, a black-marketeer who is given a chance to prove himself. We are shown human greatness, but without undue solemnity. Contrapuntally, Munk gives us glimpses of Polish officers living in a German prison camp, shocking us with the hollow fervour of their ideas, feelings, and illusions. This is yet another facet of Poland's destiny.

It is probable that, where film-making is concerned, Poland shares the lead with France and Italy—certainly if one compares her annual output of films (only 20 in 1961) with the artistic results achieved. One of the many reasons for this is that Polish film-makers have not been compelled to cope with inhibiting pre-war traditions and that the political influence of Kremlin doctrines has only delayed trends, not stamped them out. The Polish cinema has not had to be cleared of Stalinist relics, and Poland was the only country in the Eastern bloc which had no Stalin memorials.

WHAT is known about Czechoslovakian films? Apart from Hedy Lamarr in *Ecstasy* (1933) by Gustav Machaty, and the world-famous puppets in trick films by Trnka, Zeman, or Pojar—nothing. It is easy to forecast that even an entirely unpolitical comedy like Karel Zeman's *Baron Münchhausen* (1962) will fail to be given a wide showing in the West.

People are still largely unaware that the films produced in the studios of Barrandov, Gottwaldov, and Bratislava have long been free of the lethargy induced by socialist-realism. For instance, films by Weiss (*The Wolf-Pit*) Krejcik (*The Higher Principle*), Vlacil (*Devil's Snare*), Brynych (*Suburban Romance*), or Steklj (*The Siren*), are all in the international class. *Siren* was the first Czech film to win the Venice Grand Prix in 1947.

Although it has not taken an aggressive form, as in Poland, there has been a definite admission in Czechoslovakia since 1956 that a man can deviate or go completely off the rails even though he carries the compass of socialism in his pocket. Criticism does not come in waves, as in Poland, but it exists in individual instances. *Olmer's Crime* (1956), a film on juvenile delinquency by Vaclav Gajer, was the first feature film of the new phase. In *Cross-Roads* (1958) and *Condemned to Life*

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(1959), Pavel Blumenfeld and Jiri Krejcik also dealt with the thorny subject of juvenile delinquency, and with more artistic conviction than Gajer. Far from throwing in their hand, however, these authors attempt to provide a solution. The stronger the characterisation, the more it is used to convey the message that individual cases are involved rather than a mass phenomenon.

Few relics of pre-1956 positivism can now be identified. In *Traces of the Past* (1957), Vaclav Krska criticises the impersonal remoteness of the Party machine, which is responsible for condemning an innocent man. Ladislav Helge attacks certain communist educational practices in *Fathers' School* (1957), in which an ambitious teacher gives his class better marks than they deserve and a father who raises the question gets stamped on by bureaucratic officialdom. *Terminus* (1958), by Kadar and Klos, is a thematic counterpart (though not, regrettably, an artistic one) of the Russian *House I Live In*, and uses an episodic technique to portray various families in an apartment house—running the gamut from the notorious drunkard to the adulterer.

Until a few years ago, Czech films were dominated by stories of war and Resistance. Notable among the few films of human and artistic value that have survived are *The Stolen Frontier* (1946) by Jiri Weiss, *The Silent Barricade* (1948) by Otokar Vavra, *The White Dove* (1959) by Frantisek Vlacil, and *Romeo, Juliet, and the Night* (1959) by Weiss. As in *The Higher Principle* (1960) by Jiri Krejcik, the path of heroism is not strictly defined.

Once the flood of war stories, which bore no relation to popular demand, had subsided, war themes were often handled in a more reflective manner. The Czechs' own share in past events came under scrutiny. Krejcik's *Midnight Mass* (1962), artistically insignificant and loaded with generalised criticism of the bourgeoisie, shows how parents who collaborated with the Wehrmacht for mercenary reasons eventually saved their skins by denouncing their own son. *Coward* (1961), Weiss's latest film, is also concerned with the split among the Slovaks during the Nazi era. *Smyk* (1960) and *Labyrinth of the Heart* by Krejcik are concerned with Czechs who become spies against their own country. In *Smyk*, this two-facedness is symbolised by an accident which changes the physical appearance of one of the characters.

Czechoslovakia, unlike Poland, is the home of comedy rather than mordant satire. For his *Invention of Destruction* (1958), a film played by live actors against fantastic trick sets, Karel Zeman received the Brussels World Exhibition's Grand Prix, and his similarly conceived *Baron Münchhausen*, with Jana Brechowa, won a prize at Locarno last year. In *Every Crown Counts* (1961), Zbynek Brynych tries, with heavy-handed humour, to polish up Marxist ideas. Jasny managed to do this with far greater success in *Procession to the Mother of God* (1961), which even Western visitors with little taste for collectivisation could

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enjoy. It will soon be impossible to serve up such material behind the Iron Curtain unless the foreground is occupied by an element of human conflict, as in *Green Horizons* (1962), a film set in a collective farm. The difficulties besetting agricultural production are covertly suggested by the fact that the new farm supervisor is the umpteenth man to hold the job.

No other country east or west of the Iron Curtain devotes so much attention to children's films. These often achieve such artistic success that they prove equally fascinating to adults. A good example is *Youthful Sorrow* (1961), which describes the almost sexual love of a pubescent boy for a black horse. Its producer, Karel Kachyny, made a name for himself with the anti-West German film *King of the Bohemian Forest*.

A survey of new trends in the Russian, Polish, and Czech cinema should evoke satisfaction not at the thought that social injustice and unhappiness also exist under communism, but rather that it has been possible to record the fact on film. The waxed floor of socialism would not have permitted such a slip in earlier years, when man's screen image was perfect, sterile—and uninteresting. Then, socialist man emerged from the test-tube, an embodiment of the communist imagination. Now, at last, he is coming closer to us and assuming individuality.

He will be a force to be reckoned with, and not only on the screen.

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CHESS AND POLITICS

D. J. Richards

IN 1568 the English poet George Turbeville, who had in that year visited the court of Ivan IV in Moscow, wrote in his *Poems Describing the Places and Manners of the Country and People of Russia*:

> *The common game is chesse,*
> *Almost the simplest will*
> *Both give a check and eke a mate,*
> *From practice comes their skill.*

Numerous similar testimonies have survived to the skill and widespread interest in chess shown by Russians throughout the game's centuries-long history in their land, where it has numbered among its devotees *byliny* heroes, tsars, artists, and politicians.

But the golden age of Russian chess opened only at the end of the Second World War. Since then Soviet grandmasters have achieved a remarkable dominance: the individual world championships for both men and women have been held exclusively by Russians; Soviet teams have almost invariably triumphed, sometimes by a crushing margin, in their encounters with other nations; and it is a rare event when Soviet participants fail to head international tournaments.

This dominance doubtless stems partly from that traditional propensity for the game noted by Turbeville, but it is more immediately a consequence of the policy of the Soviet authorities, who have ascribed to chess a considerable social and political role. It is this role which the present article attempts to analyse.

Whereas in non-communist countries chess is generally regarded as, at best, a highly skilled game, in the USSR it is considered to be an integral part of Soviet culture, with a part to play in education and in politics. M. Botvinnik, the present world champion, in an essay on Soviet chess, writes: 'Chess forms a small but significant part of our culture. . . . When we Soviet masters compete in tournaments or study the game we know that we are performing a socially valuable cultural activity and bringing benefit to the Soviet state.'[1]

The role of chess in Soviet society was first defined at the third All-Union Chess congress, meeting in Moscow in 1924. In the words of the Soviet chess historian, M. S. Kogan:

> The third All-Union congress also played a colossal role in the question of establishing the significance of chess. 'Chess is a powerful weapon of intellectual culture'—this was the slogan under which the Soviet chess movement was to develop. In the hands of the proletariat chess has to become a weapon which must be used to

[1] M. Botvinnik, *Izbrannye partii 1926–1946* (Leningrad, 1949).

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> strengthen the growth of intellectual culture amongst the industrial and peasant masses, bringing them closer to a conscious participation in the political struggle of the proletariat.[2]

Scientific support for the thesis that chess can exercise a beneficial educational influence was provided in 1926 by an interesting booklet which reported the results of a series of psychological tests carried out on the participants in the 1925 Moscow tournament. Among the conclusions reached by the experimenters was the following:

> Inasmuch as the enumerated qualities [needed for success in chess] are indisputably positive character-traits, chess becomes a powerful method of self-discipline and self-development, bringing benefit not only to those who could become masters, but also to those who do not possess such inclinations; chess furthers the development of pedagogically valuable qualities.[3]

Among the valuable qualities the experimenters had in mind were logical and imaginative thinking, self-control, and strength of will. At the same time the psychologists recognised the esthetic qualities of chess:

> The results of our experiments give equal grounds for characterising chess both by the tokens of knowledge (intellect) and by the tokens of art (creative activity, images). We cannot formulate this combination better than by describing chess as an intellectual art.[4]

The belief that chess simultaneously inculcates desirable personal qualities and increases esthetic awareness has remained constant in Soviet writings on the game. An article in *Pravda* (29 August 1936) which is still quoted with approval, expressed this clearly:

> For a long time chess has been one of the most important factors in the cultural education of the people. We value this 'wise' game, standing on the frontier between science and art, because it contains extremely rich elements of artistic expression. Chess develops in the player methodical, logical, and consequential thinking, and gives scope to analytical ability and imagination. But, above all, chess is a tense struggle, demanding for the achievement of victory persistence, endurance and an iron will.

Soviet writers on chess like to add weight to this view and to enhance the pedigree of their game by reference to Marx and Lenin. This same article, for instance, claims: 'Our great leaders, Marx and Lenin, devoted themselves enthusiastically to chess in their leisure hours. They saw in it primarily a means of strengthening the will, a training-ground for resolve and nervous strength.' (Here it is difficult to resist quoting Wilhelm Liebknecht's reminiscences of Marx's chess-playing: 'When Marx got into a difficult position he would get angry, and losing a game would cause him to fly into a rage!')

[2] M. S. Kogan, *Kratkii ocherk istorii shakhmat v Rossii* (Moscow, 1931), p. 90.
[3] I. N. Dyakov, N. V. Petrovsky, P. A. Rudik: *Psikhologia shakhmatnoi igry* (Moscow, 1926), p. 152.
[4] Ibid. p. 147.

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In general, Russian players, ascribing a high cultural value to chess, are much more inclined to accept the game as an art than are Western masters. It is significant that there is no ready English equivalent for the common Russian expression '*shakhmatnoe iskusstvo*'. The *Bolshaya Sovetskaya* Encyclopedia talks of chess as 'an art, appearing in the form of a game', and many outstanding Russian grandmasters have viewed chess in this way. Smyslov expresses the common view:

> I saw in chess an interesting realm of creative ideas, based on the opposing conceptions of two players, who in the course of a tense struggle strive to create a work of art.[5]

Of course, it is not only Russians who have regarded chess as more than a game. For example, in his *The Morals of Chess* (1786), Benjamin Franklin wrote: 'The game of chess is not merely idle amusement; several very valuable qualities of mind, useful in the course of human life, are to be acquired and strengthened by it . . . for life is a kind of chess.' Similarly, two non-Russian world champions, Wilhelm Steinitz (1836–1900) and Emanuel Lasker (1868–1941), can be numbered among many others who have drawn parallels between chess and life. But such opinions had never before gained the ear of any government.

THE importance which is attached to chess in the USSR today is reflected in the social status of the leading players and in the responsibilities imposed on them. Widely-known and highly esteemed, outstanding Soviet grandmasters [6] are said to earn the equivalent of about £4,000 a year by playing and writing. Many of them have received high Soviet honours. In 1957, for instance, twenty-eight leading chess-masters were awarded orders or medals; among them Botvinnik and Smyslov received the Order of Lenin and six other leading players the Order of the Red Banner of Labour.

The privileged position of the Soviet master, as that of other elite groups in the USSR, is balanced by responsibilities. He is expected to set an example not only in the skill which he displays at the chessboard, but also in his social and political conduct. As a recent editorial in the leading Soviet chess journal states: 'A high-ranking chess-master is obliged not only to play well. He is obliged to be an example of the strictest observance of the rules of socialist society. . . .'[7]

Soviet players are constantly urged to raise the level of their political consciousness: 'It must be remembered that no Soviet grandmaster or

[5] V. V. Smyslov: *Izbrannye partii* (Moscow, 1952), p. 16.
In recent years a debate has been conducted in Soviet chess circles on whether chess meets the complete Marxist definition of art. Although most of the participants recognised that chess possesses many characteristics shared by art, it seemed impossible for the game to fulfil the Marxist criterion that art should reflect objective reality. At the end of 1960, however, Botvinnik put forward the ingenious view that chess is an artistic reflection of man's logical thought processes—which are undeniably a part of reflective reality. (In a paper '*Lyudi i mashiny za shakhmatnoi doskoi*', read in Berlin in November 1960 and published in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* 1961, 3.)

[6] At the beginning of 1960 there were in the USSR 19 grandmasters and 150 masters.

[7] *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1961/8.

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master can avoid being systematically engaged in raising his ideological-political level.'[8] At the same time they must not forget their responsibilities towards society: 'The passing on of his experience through participation in tournaments and matches, in teaching and in literary work is the social duty of every grandmaster and master.'[9] Those who fail to do so are publicly criticised. In recent years Botvinnik, the world champion, and Bronstein, Geller, and Smyslov, leading contenders for the world championship, have all been attacked in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*. Geller has come under particularly heavy fire for his alleged arrogance and attempts to cut himself off from the *kollektiv*.

Soviet masters competing abroad look upon themselves as ambassadors of Soviet culture, and victories in international tournaments have a political significance. The latter tendency was particularly marked in the chauvinistic atmosphere of the thirties and the immediate post-war years. For example, after sharing the first prize with Capablanca at the 1936 Nottingham tournament, Botvinnik sent a message to Stalin which included the following words: 'Inspired by your great slogan "Catch up with and surpass", I am glad I have been able to realise it, if only on that small sector on which our country has entrusted me to fight.'[10] And when, twelve years later, Botvinnik won the world championship, *Pravda* wrote (17 May 1948):

> M. Botvinnik is a member of the bolshevik party, its pupil, and an ardent lover of our homeland. As befits a bolshevik, Botvinnik was not simply playing chess, he was defending the honour of his country, the honour of his socialist motherland. Botvinnik's brilliant victory is not only a testimony to his own heroic powers, it is a victory of our socialist culture, an integral part of which is chess.

More recently these sentiments have been replaced by an emphasis on the role of chess in the struggle for peace.

The picture of the Soviet chess-master, integrated in society and playing his acknowledged part in the building of communism, is often contrasted in Soviet publications with the supposedly cheerless existence of the Western professional player. This notion is well expressed by Flohr: 'But I have only to recall the situation of players abroad to begin, through that contrast, to see even more clearly the gulf which divides the culture of our Soviet land from capitalist culture. Even the very best representatives of the art of chess abroad lead a truly pitiful existence.'[11] And this picture is often taken to be symptomatic of the state of Western society: 'Quite a different situation has arisen in the West. As was noted above, the famous old masters have left the scene, but no new ones have appeared. That is only natural: chess is a part of culture and if a culture is declining, then chess too will go downhill.'[12]

[8] 'Moralny oblik sovetskovo mastera', ibid., 1951/12.
[9] 'Obshchestvenny dolg grossmeisterov i masterov', ibid., 1956/4.
[10] *Pravda*, 30 August 1936.
[11] Ibid., 18 May 1948.
[12] M. Botvinnik, *Sovetskaya shakhmatnaya shkola* (Moscow, 1951), p. 54.

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The thesis that chess is a part of culture and that a nation's prowess in the game provides a yardstick for its general intellectual and cultural standing is not a Soviet invention. Goethe once dubbed chess 'the touchstone of the intellect', and in 1923 the Czech grandmaster Richard Réti pointed out an interesting phenomenon 'If we trace the history of chess we shall find that the game was in vogue mostly in those countries that played a leading part in the matter of culture.'[13] Indeed, about the year 1500 chess flourished in Spain and Portugal. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Italian players were famous, but leadership in chess passed to France in the eighteenth century and the Napoleonic era. In the nineteenth century chess was in vogue in England and, later on, in Germany, Russia, and America. Now in modern times chess supremacy, like political power, appears to be moving away from Europe to North and South America and to Russia.

ADMINISTRATIVELY, chess in the USSR is included in the Physical Culture movement, and the ultimate authority for the policies of the Soviet chess organisation is derived from party decisions regarding physical culture. Two particularly important central committee decrees were those of 13 June 1925 and 27 December 1948. The former declared for the first time: 'that physical culture must form an integral part of the general political and cultural education of the masses and must be included in the general plan of campaign of the appropriate public and state organisations and institutions.' The latter defined the post-war tasks of the physical culture movement: '... to strive for the expansion of the mass physical culture movement in the land, continually to raise standards, and in the coming years to capture the world championships in the most important fields of sport.'

In this last task Soviet chess anticipated the decree: six months earlier Botvinnik had won the world championship by heading the match-tournament organised by FIDE (Fédération Internationale des Échecs) to find a successor to the former champion, Alekhine, who had died in 1946.

The policy of attracting mass participation has been particularly successful in chess. In 1929 there were in the USSR approximately 150,000 registered players.[14] By 1957 this number had risen to almost two million, and in 1959 the goal of three million registered players was set for the end of 1962.[15] In addition there are many more thousands, if not millions, who take an interest in the game without joining any official club. Wide coverage is given to chess in the Soviet press and numerous books on the game are published annually in large editions.

The extent of popular interest in chess can also be gauged from the crowds who attend matches or tournaments played in the principal Soviet

[13] R. Réti, *Modern Ideas in Chess* (London, 1923), p. 102.
[14] Kogan, op. cit. p. 93.
[15] *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1959, 10. This figure appears all the more striking if it is contrasted with the membership of the United States Chess Federation—6,000.

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cities. An English observer wrote about the 1951 Botvinnik-Bronstein world championship match:

> To picture what happened in the recent championship match in Moscow one must imagine New York's Carnegie Hall or London's Royal Albert Hall being given over to playing chess three nights a week and being filled night after night with chess enthusiasts prepared to pay the admission charges for a good concert.[16]

The policy of large numbers serves two main aims: theoretically it plays its part in the development of the new Soviet man; practically it provides a vast reservoir for the generation of fresh talent. The new 1961 Communist party programme again stresses the important educational role of physical culture in the future and the Soviet chess authorities have pledged themselves to further efforts.

THE history of Soviet chess faithfully mirrors the development of Soviet society and the changing policies of the party.

The twenties were marked in chess, as in Soviet political life, by the establishment of organisations, the imposition of political control, and the formulation of policy. From their earliest days the Soviet authorities took an interest in chess and infused into it a political content. In 1920, on the initiative of A. F. Ilin-Zhenevsky, a chess master who held high government and party posts, the game was included in the pre-conscription training programmes worked out for the army. In the same year, again on Ilin-Zhenevsky's initiative, a chess olympiad was held in Moscow. This included what was in effect the first Soviet championship. The winner was Alekhine. He left Russia in 1921.

In 1923 an All-Russian Chess Federation was formed, which was in many respects a revival of the pre-revolutionary All-Russian Chess Association. This body clearly planned to continue organising chess on non-political lines. Opposition to it arose and at an All-Union Chess congress, held in Moscow in 1924, the All-Russian Chess Federation was disbanded and a new organisation set up which was placed under the control of the Chess Section of the Central Council for Physical Culture.

At this congress emphasis was laid on the contribution chess could make towards the education of the masses. Two slogans were coined: 'Chess is a powerful weapon of intellectual culture,' and 'Take chess to the workers.' Official support was given to the establishment of new clubs in factories, farms, military units, schools, and other institutions. As part of this campaign to excite greater public interest in chess a large international tournament, financed by the Soviet government, was held in Moscow in 1925. Eleven of the world's leading foreign masters, including the world champion, Capablanca, competed together with ten Soviet representatives.

At the same time the Soviet chess authorities declined an invitation to membership of FIDE, which had been founded in 1924, alleging that

[16] *The World Chess Championships 1951* (London, 1951), Chapter III.

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its apolitical front masked a hostility to the interests of the working class. Instead, in 1926 the USSR joined the Workers' Chess International, withdrawing, however, three years later because of 'schismatic activities' within the movement.

The late twenties and early thirties, the period of the first five-year plan, saw an intensification of effort also on the part of the chess authorities. In the words of Kogan, writing in 1931:

> One must record the determined turn, which began in 1929, towards saturating all chess work with a political content and bringing it into harmony with the tasks of socialist construction. Chess organisations are pledging themselves to socialist competition, sending shock brigades to work on collective farms, carrying on international work, liquidating illiteracy, and participating in every way in the various campaigns pursued by Soviet society. From the point of view of the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat, chess is not an end in itself, but a means of raising the cultural (and thereby also the political) level of the labouring masses of the world.[17]

It is clear from this quotation that the Soviet chess authorities saw their work as an integral part of the overall effort being forced on Soviet society. Consequently the current slogans of industrialisation, 'socialist competition', 'shock brigades', etc., were applied to chess. In the thirties Soviet chess, too, aimed to 'catch up with and surpass' the West, and Soviet players were compared with stakhanovites.

During the thirties, as the country's political and economic power grew, Soviet chess players began to make their mark in major international tournaments. By 1936 *Pravda* could claim—with some justification—'the USSR is becoming the classical land of chess' (29 August 1936). Particularly successful was Botvinnik, who by the end of the decade was recognised as the leading contender for the world championship held by Alekhine. The outbreak of the Second World War prevented a projected match, negotiations for which were almost complete.

After the end of the war the emergence of the USSR as a major world power was paralleled by its domination of the chess arena. This domination was heralded most strikingly by two victories over the American team, which in the thirties had been the strongest in the world. In 1945 the Soviet team won a radio-match by $15\frac{1}{2}$–$4\frac{1}{2}$, and in the following year repeated this success by a $12\frac{1}{2}$–$7\frac{1}{2}$ victory in an over-the-board match, played in Moscow. Soviet successes reached their peak in the 1948 match-tournament for the world championship. Botvinnik took first place, followed by two other Soviet players, Smyslov and Keres.

Soviet membership of the United Nations was paralleled by entry into FIDE in 1947, twenty years after that body's first invitation had been rejected. The rapidly growing strength of Soviet chess, taken together with the view that chess is a part of culture, led in the nationalistic atmosphere of the late forties to attempts to establish the existence of a specifically Soviet school of chess and to formulate its characteristics.

[17] Kogan, op. cit. p. 93.

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Although the question of a Soviet school of chess had been raised earlier,[18] one of the first serious attempts to define its characteristics was made by Botvinnik in a paper, 'Otechestvennaya shkola shakhmatnovo iskusstva', which he read late in 1948 at a general meeting of the RSFSR chess section.[19] 1951 saw the publication of the world champion's popular but authoritative booklet *Sovetskaya shakhmatnaya shkola* and the first edition of Kotov and Yusovich's more substantial work of the same title. A second, revised edition of the latter appeared in 1955, and a third, English language edition, in 1958.

Before this time the term 'The Russian school of chess' referred not only to those Russian masters who had distinguished themselves in the chess world before 1917, but also to their Soviet successors. The 1945 victory over the United States, for instance, was hailed as a brilliant triumph for the *Russian* school of chess over the American.

The characteristics of the Soviet school are outlined in many publications of the early fifties.

First, the school is said to embody the qualities of Soviet man: 'The traits of Soviet man in general—his spirit of invention, his resourcefulness, his dislike of resting on his laurels, his bold solution of theoretical problems, and his exacting, critical attitude towards himself—exercised their influence on the Soviet school.'[20] Secondly, since chess is regarded as a part of Soviet socialist culture, the eventual triumph of the Soviet school is considered inevitable. Thirdly, Soviet players are patriots:

> . . . the decisive factor, determining the success of the Soviet school of chess, is our vital Soviet patriotism. Soviet players, meeting the champions of other countries over the chessboard, know that they are representatives of their great homeland; they know that all Soviet men and women follow their performances and wish them success. This patriotic feeling of responsibility increases the strength and will to win of our masters.[21]

Fourthly, the Soviet school is said to have worked out a scientific approach to chess in matters of research, teaching, general training, and preparation for matches. A fifth feature claimed for the Soviet school of chess is its wide popularity [*massovost*].

Finally, the school, it is asserted, is based on the heritage of the past, especially on the foundations laid by Chigorin and Alekhine. It is worth examining a little more closely the Soviet treatment of these two key figures.

[18] In 1944 Botvinnik had written: 'Is there a Soviet school of chess? I think there is. As a matter of fact it has developed before my eyes.'

[19] This paper was published in a shortened version in *Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1949, 2. It appeared again in Botvinnik's *Izbrannye partii*, and much of it was also used in his *Sovetskaya shakhmatnaya shkola*. It was probably this paper, too, which provided the inspiration for *The Times*' fourth leader, 'Chess and Class Warfare', of 31 December 1948.

[20] Kotov and Yusovich, *The Soviet School of Chess* (Moscow, 1958), p. 79.

[21] V. Vinogradov (ed.), *Sovetskie shakhmatisty v borbe za pervenstvo mira* (Moscow, 1954), p. 8.

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M. I. CHIGORIN (1850–1908), the leading Russian player at the end of the nineteenth century, has long been acknowledged as an influential figure in Russian chess, but his elevation to 'the great patriarchal figure of our chess history',[22] and to one of the key minds in the general evolution of chess thought, belongs to the period when the concept of the Soviet school was being formulated. The years 1949–52 saw the publication of several books as well as numerous articles on Chigorin's life and work.

It must be admitted that until recently Chigorin's talents and influence have been underestimated in the West, but for their part the Russians have more than restored the balance. In the early fifties adulation of Chigorin and a parallel disregard for his Western contemporaries (including the world champions, Steinitz and Lasker), occasionally reached such absurd limits that comment was excited even in the Soviet press. The author of a popular booklet on Chigorin was sharply criticised by Romanovsky: 'Grekov almost reduces to nought the chess thought of Steinitz, Tarrasch, Pilsbury, Schlechter, Lasker and many other extremely strong players.'[23]

To this same period belong a revival of interest in other Russian masters of the nineteenth century and an attempt to establish their importance for world chess. The early fifties saw the publication of numerous articles on Petrov, Jaenisch, Urusov, Shumov, and Shiffers, and by the mid-fifties their significance had achieved general acceptance in the USSR. Thus, whereas the first edition of Kotov and Yusovich's *Sovetskaya shakhmatnaya shkola* (1951) dismissed them in one paragraph, the revised edition of 1955 contains a new opening chapter, which gives much more information about these players and stresses their important role.

Naturally, attempts were made to enlist all the nineteenth-century masters in the ranks of Russian radical thought. An article by Romanov published in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1953, 11), after emphasising again the importance of studying the history of chess against the social background, goes on to maintain that 'Russian chess was closely linked with progressive democratic Russian culture', and that Chigorin, continuing the progressive traditions of his predecessors, 'was the creator of a realistic chess world-view', opposed to the so-called dogmatic, formalistic, and anti-realistic theories of Steinitz and his followers. Recently a more balanced view of the evolution of chess thought has prevailed, in which the role of Western masters is fully acknowledged.[24]

The influence of Alekhine on modern Soviet masters is indisputable, but his establishment as the second patriarchal figure of the Soviet school makes an intriguing story. A. A. Alekhine (1892–1946), the scion of a noble Russian family, was a recognised master at the age of sixteen. He

[22] Grekov: *Soviet Chess*, New York, 1949, p. 16.
[23] 'Posmertny trud N. I. Grekova' (*Shakhmaty v SSSR*, 1951, 3).
[24] Cf., for example, the first chapter of V. A. Alatortsev's *Problemy sovremennoi teorii shakhmat* (Moscow, 1960).

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fought in the First World War and was twice decorated, but his activities during the Revolution and Civil War have never been established. One legend has him sentenced to death by the bolsheviks but spared by Trotsky; another portrays him as a Soviet magistrate in Odessa, responsible for the execution of many White Russians. Certain only is that in October 1920 he won the first Soviet championship and that early in 1921 he was in Germany, a refugee who never again set foot in Russia. In 1927 Alekhine won the world championship which, except for the years 1935–37, he held until his death. During the Second World War he competed in seven tournaments in Germany and pro-nazi articles appeared over his signature. At the end of the war he retired to Portugal, where he died.

Before the war Soviet works on chess, if they mentioned Alekhine at all, referred to his betrayal and, understandably enough, during the war he was fiercely attacked for his collaboration. For some time the opening worked out by Alekhine and named after him (Alekhine's Defence) was restyled the Moscow Defence.

Shortly after his death in 1946, however, there began a gradual rehabilitation. Alekhine's obituary notice in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1946, 5) pays tribute to his chess but attacks his lack of political principle. Botvinnik's paper of 1948, *Otechestvennaya shkola shakhmatnovo iskusstva*, classes Alekhine as the second greatest Russian master after Chigorin, and his authoritative *Sovetskaya shakhmatnaya shkola* (1951) devotes to Alekhine a whole chapter, which turns attention away from his politics.[25]

Nevertheless, at this time Alekhine's position was still subject to debate, for the first edition of Kotov and Yusovich's book, also published in 1951, devotes only two pages to the late world champion. Here he is condemned as a nobleman who 'had no blood ties with the people and betrayed them'. Grekov, in the general surveys of chess given in his two books on Chigorin, almost completely ignores Alekhine.

By 1953, however, Alekhine was fully rehabilitated: in that year appeared the first volume of Kotov's large *Shakhmatnoe nasledie Alekhina*. The introduction to this work claims that it was only the outbreak of the Second World War which frustrated Alekhine's plan to return to Russia. The second edition of Kotov and Yusovich, published in 1955, devotes eight pages to Alekhine, refrains from attacking his politics, and now brackets him with Chigorin as 'an implacable fighter for the expansion of chess as a game for the people'. The third edition of this work, the English-language edition of 1958, goes further, devoting a whole chapter to Alekhine, 'Russia's Greatest Player'. The climax of Alekhine's rehabilitation in the USSR came in 1956, when an international Alekhine memorial tournament was staged in Moscow.

25 'Let us here not touch on his political *persona*, that lack of political principle, which led Alekhine into the ranks of the emigrés; all this has received well-deserved evaluation in the Soviet press': p. 26.

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IN the harsh political climate of the years 1946 to 1953 Soviet successes in international chess—especially Botvinnik's triumph in 1948—were given an open political gloss. This is expressed very clearly in the introduction to the first edition of Kotov and Yusovich's *Sovetskaya shakhmatnaya shkola* (1951):

> The increasing number of successes achieved by Soviet masters in the field of sport and their victories in international competitions acquire at the present time a particular political significance. Each fresh international victory of our sportsmen is a victory for the Soviet regime and the socialist system of physical education; it provides indisputable proof of the superiority of socialism over the declining capitalist system.

Botvinnik himself, commenting on the 1948 world championship match tournament, said in an interview: 'The victory of the Soviet players is a triumph for Soviet chess; it is a victory on the part of Soviet patriots, reared and fostered by our great party of Lenin and Stalin. We shall strive for the further successes of Soviet culture to the glory of our beloved homeland' (*Pravda*, 17 May 1948).

These early post-war years saw also, under Soviet influence, a striking development of chess in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia.

After 1953 the thaw in Soviet political and cultural life made its mark on Soviet chess. As early as June 1953 the Soviet chess team set off for New York to play the first international match with the United States since 1946. However, having reached Paris, the team learnt of certain restrictions imposed on their movements in New York and turned back in protest. The following year these restrictions were lifted and a match took place in New York, the Russians winning by 20–12. 1955 saw the Americans in Moscow for the return match, which the Russians won by 25–7. Perhaps the most striking feature of these matches was the friendly atmosphere which prevailed and the 'Geneva spirit' of the reporting in the Soviet press, which contrasted so strongly with the virulence of the early post-war years. The journal *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1955, 8), carried a very amicable editorial, which included the words: 'In a friendly match the result is not the most important thing. In the present case the final score was even more favourable for the USSR team than we had expected', and ended: 'To the next meeting, our American chess friends!' The following number of the periodical contained a large photograph taken at an Independence Day reception in the United States Embassy in Moscow. It shows members of the Soviet and American teams standing with Marshal Bulganin and a smiling Mr Khrushchev, whose arm cordially encircles the shoulders of the American champion, Reshevsky.

In this period the official view of the role of international chess was brought into line with overall Soviet strategy. No longer is its chief function the demonstration of the superiority of the communist over the

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capitalist system, but, in the words of an editorial in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* (1955, 8):

> Our grandmasters and masters strive for meetings with as many chess organisations abroad as possible. Soviet chess players know that thereby they are contributing towards the improvement of understanding between peoples, towards the struggle for peace.

The earlier strident insistence that Soviet successes in chess are a natural consequence of the Soviet system has abated. Significantly, the violent introduction to the first edition of Kotov and Yudovich is omitted from the revised second edition of 1955, and the introduction to a more recent work on chess states: 'The true cause of the successes of Soviet players is to be found in the *massovost* and the deep theoretical analysis of chess in the USSR.' [26]

Nevertheless, chess still retains a political content. Editorials in *Shakhmaty v SSSR* still discuss the role of chess in the building of communism, now with reference to the new party programme; masters who neglect their social duties are still castigated publicly; organisers are still urged to increase the membership of chess clubs and to inculcate the correct political attitude to their charges, and the USSR doubtless still scores points in the propaganda contest through its domination of world chess. Until very recently this situation has provoked surprisingly little reaction in the United States, although nine years ago, after Smyslov won the 1953 Zürich Candidates' Tournament, comments did appear in the American press, suggesting that the Russians might have been playing as a team rather than as individuals.

On 13 May 1962, however, the *New York Times* published a letter signed by Mr Jacques Coe, the president of the Manhattan chess club and vice-president of the American Chess Federation. Mr Coe pleaded for state aid for American chess-players, to enable them to compete more successfully with the Russians: 'We all know that the United States spends millions for Voice of America and other forms of propaganda', writes Mr Coe, 'yet this simple and inexpensive opportunity is overlooked'. Whether the present seemingly more image-conscious American administration responds to this plea or not remains to be seen.

More recently still the young American champion, Bobby Fischer, published a most violent attack on the Soviet participants in the Curaçao Candidates' Tournament which finished last June. (Candidates' tournaments, for which masters qualify through a series of eliminating competitions, are designed to produce a challenger to play the world champion in a match for his title.) In an article, 'Schacher im Schach', in the West German magazine *Der Spiegel* (1962, No. 41), Fischer alleges that at Curaçao the three leading Russians, Petrosian, Geller, and Keres, planned a series of quick draws among themselves, so as to conserve their efforts for games with the other competitors, and also accuses them of unfairly advising each other during the course of their games.

[26] V. A. Alatortsev, op. cit. p. 5.

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In conclusion Fischer declares his intention of boycotting all future candidates' tournaments.

An examination of the score table of the Curaçao tournament lends support to Fischer's argument that the Russians played as a team: every one of the twelve games between the three leading Russians was drawn, the longest in twenty-seven moves and seven in under twenty moves. Commenting on this, the English magazine *Chess* writes (21 July 1962):

> *Could* Soviet players battle as individuals and not as a team, if an outsider appeared likely to win the Candidates' Tournament? They would probably consider it unpatriotic to do so. Which, in view of the overall strength of USSR chess, adds up to the conclusion that we are unlikely to see a non-Russian challenger for the world championship for ten or fifteen years yet.

In any event it is clear that the role of chess in the USSR—if not yet in the USA—is no longer that celebrated in Turbeville's homely verses, quoted at the beginning of this article; nor are all the aspects of modern international chess embraced within Tarrasch's dictum that 'chess, like love, like music, has the power to make men happy'.

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ART AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

John Fizer

The more unconscious the creation, the more powerful.

W. B. Yeats

THEMATICALLY, Soviet esthetics is almost as multiple as its counterpart in the West, yet its treatment of most of the problems makes it quite different. While traditional esthetics is speculative and hypothetical, Soviet esthetics pretends to be precise, scientifically verifiable, and hence of great utility in understanding and directing the cognitive as well as the creative process.

The development of Soviet esthetics into a purely normative discipline is a topic in itself. Most of the estheticians who are considered to be the founding fathers of current Soviet esthetical theory, by their own definition of esthetics, hardly shared the present Soviet esthetical dogmatism. Plekhanov, for example, many of whose views are still regarded in the USSR as authentically Marxian, wrote: 'Scientific esthetics does not give art any prescriptions. It does not say: "You must employ such and such devices." It limits itself to observation of how various rules and devices arise and dominate in various historical epochs. It does not state eternal laws of art; it attempts to study those laws which condition its historical development.'[1] Current Soviet esthetics, on the other hand, does tell what devices, what rules, creators should follow; it does lay down what is beautiful and should be preserved and enhanced, and what is ugly and should be discarded. Esthetics in the USSR has become an applied ideology, and every ideology 'has a controlling function'.[2]

This article attempts to present the problem of the unconscious as it is treated by Soviet esthetics. This is crucial in comprehending the Soviet approach to a whole array of other problems in the field of esthetics. In fact, Soviet esthetics affirm that the progressive decay of bourgeois art is caused by its excessive exploitation of the unconscious sphere of the human psyche, while the ever-new achievements of socialist art are conditioned by the fact that it shuns this sphere and, like other types of intellectual endeavour, is a purely rational undertaking.

Before examining the treatment of the unconscious by Soviet esthetics, it is useful to see how it has been treated by Soviet psychology, since, *per se*, it is a psychological problem, and Soviet esthetics claims to be 'linked to psychological science which studies the laws of the psychic activity of people and their development'.[3]

[1] G. V. Plekhanov, *Sudby russkoi kritiki.*
[2] L. I. Timofeyev, *O teorii literatury* (Moscow, 1959), p. 96.
[3] *Osnovy marksistsko-leninskoi estetiki* (Moscow, 1960), p. 14

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DURING the twenties, Soviet psychologists, both reflexologists and reactologists, battled against the concept of consciousness as not being susceptible to experimental verification. This attitude derived partly from ideological considerations, for, once recognised as a valid psychic function, consciousness could easily be conceived as the one integrating human behaviour. This in turn would have various philosophical implications, elevating the human mind into the central position. But the dominant Soviet trend in this respect was intent to prove that man is not free, that so-called free will, consciousness, mind, and the like, are imaginary concepts promoted and exploited by political forces alien to the working class.

With the dismissal of consciousness, however, Soviet psychologists in the twenties turned their attention to the unconscious and tended to ascribe to it an important role in the direction and integration of human behaviour. Bekhterev, the leading reflexologist, for example, said that 'the unconscious is the real psyche'.[4] Similar opinions were expressed by A. R. Luria, by A. B. Zalkind, by the educational theorist Pinkevich, and other prominent figures in the social sciences.[5] However, enthusiasm for the unconscious did not last long. Around 1930 it began to subside and soon it was declared *problema non grata*. Ironically enough, as it faded away, the problem of consciousness made its re-entry and was finally officially sanctioned by the party. Thus, beginning in 1936, consciousness became the focal problem of psychological attention in the USSR. Conscious understanding, purposive action, and the like, were also made major objectives of Soviet education.

> Soviet psychology is in contradistinction to bourgeois psychology in this respect: bourgeois psychology takes the unconscious as a point of departure, as though it were the central core of man's personality, but Soviet psychology has explicitly fostered the theory that consciousness is the highest, most specifically human level of development in the psyche and has indicated the dominant role which conscious influences play as compared with unconscious influences. In this respect, Soviet psychology maintains as the basic principle of didactics the doctrine of conscious understanding. And, in questions of training, Soviet pedagogy holds the principle that it is the conscious personality of man, his conscious behaviour, or his conscious discipline that are to be moulded.[6]

The reconciliation of this concept of personal consciousness, personal purposive action, personal understanding, with an over-all economic and historic determinism is a topic in itself and cannot be treated adequately here. But it is useful to mention in this connection another term which Soviet psychologists use. The term in question is *mediated determination*,

[4] V. M. Bekhterev, *General Principles of Human Psychology* (New York, 1933), p. 41.
[5] A. R. Luria, 'Psychoanalysis as a System of Monistic Psychology', *Psikhologia i marksizm*, ed. Kornilov (Leningrad, 1925), p. 60; A. B. Zalkind, *Ocherki kultury revoliutsionnovo vremeni* (Moscow, 1924), p. 59.
[6] A. A. Smirnov, 'The Task and Content of Instruction in Psychology in Pedagogical and Teachers' Institutes', *Sovetskaia pedagogika*, 1947, No. 12. Quoted in R. A. Bauer, *The New Man in Soviet Psychology* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 132.

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which means that human behaviour is not determined directly, but that its causation or stimulation is mediated through the consciousness of each person.[7]

In brief, in the USSR 'conscious processes are studied almost to the complete exclusion of unconscious ones. Only in the field of physiology, much more closely allied with psychiatry than psychology in the Soviet scheme, has there been systematic work on unconscious processes.'[8] But again and again, probably unintentionally, Soviet psychologists, through their experimental work, arrive at conclusions confirming the unconscious. Thus, K. M. Bykov, in his experimentation on introceptive conditioned reflexes, came to formulate a concept of the unconscious, although, as he claims, on a 'materialistic basis'.[9]

The question why Soviet psychology, and social sciences in general, were forced into this directed and limited scope of research, and, specifically, why unconsciousness was declared taboo, is difficult to answer with a concise and definite statement. Dr Bauer's hypothesis seems plausible and convincing:

> The Bolshevik is primarily a man of action, and not a detached scholar. A 'common-sense' approach to human behaviour seems to be more comforting to the activist for a variety of reasons. It does not challenge the adequacy of his own premises for action. . . . This is particularly true if the existence of unconscious motives is postulated. . . . It must be assumed that one of the motives behind the progressive restriction of applications of psychology and the rejection of unconscious factors in the model of man has been the desire of the practical man of Soviet politics to reassure himself that the world is not beyond his powers of control.[10]

IT is interesting to observe that while Soviet psychology initially explored the sphere of the unconscious and even attempted to prove that the contents of this unconscious often works against free will, Soviet esthetics, since its inception, has declared itself against the unconscious. Even Plekhanov spoke of bourgeois art as one which devoted itself to 'the fruitless bickering with completely empty personal experiences and sickly phantasies'.[11] Extreme individualism and subjectivism, Plekhanov thought, are characteristic of bourgeois art. Socialist art was to be free of such maladies. Socialist art and socialist esthetics would be 'objective in the same manner as physics and they will be alien to any metaphysics'.[12] V. M. Friche, an early Soviet esthetician who was the first

[7] Rubinshtein, *Osnovy obshchei psikhologii* (1940), pp. 508–510; 'The Problem of Consciousness in the Light of Dialectical Materialism,' *Izvestia Akademii Nauk SSSR*, Seriia istorii i filosofii, 1945, II, No. 3, pp. 148–158.

[8] R. A. Bauer, op. cit., p. 136.

[9] K. M. Bykov, *Rol kory golovnovo mozga v deiatelnosti vnutrennikh organov* (Moscow, 1947), p. 17; see also a note on Bykov's school of conditioning: I. D. London 'Psychology in the USSR', *The American Journal of Psychology*, July 1957.

[10] R. A. Bauer, op. cit., p. 192.

[11] G. V. Plekhanov, 'Iskusstvo i obshchestvennaia zhizn', *Literatura i estetika* (Moscow, 1958), vol. I, p. 185.

[12] G. V. Plekhanov, *Sudby russkoi kritiki.*

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to examine and reject Freud's theories, was violently opposed to any alliance with psychologies propounding the unconscious in human behaviour. So was Lunacharsky, in his effort to create positive esthetics in harmony with the general propositions of Marxism.[13]

During the twenties the conceptual disparity among various intellectual disciplines, such as, in this case, psychology and esthetics, was possible so long as each continued to claim a Marxian character. The Communist Party did not press for an all-embracing unity. Thus psychology and esthetics could pretend to be Marxian while, in fact, differing profoundly on problems of common interest. It was in the thirties that the quest for unity became an obsession with the Communist party. Interdisciplinary relationships had to be redefined and re-established in terms of Marxist-Leninist doctrine.

As far as we know, Voronsky was the only communist literary critic who in the twenties gave serious attention to the problem of the unconscious in the creative process. His views are strongly reminiscent both of Jung and of George Lukacs.

For Voronsky, artistic images are created intuitively, i.e., within the context of the accumulated experience of previous generations existing in the sphere of the subconscious. Such experiences constitute an enormous power in the human psyche. Periodically they erupt on to the surface of consciousness and thereby force man to behave in a way he never did before. They change his habitual pattern of behaviour, his regular structure (*stroi*) of thoughts and emotions, his entire character, and his attitude towards his environment. Artistic images are the reflections of the undistorted, genuine images of the world man preserves in his subconscious. Man is vaguely aware of these images. He experiences a continuous longing for them, and, in his nostalgia, creates sagas and legends, sings songs and writes novels; in brief, he creates art. Thus art is a way of recreating or finding such images. At the moment of creation, the creator is primarily an instrument of the overpowering forces of the subconscious. Form, style, composition, and other artistic devices are nothing but techniques of conscious analysis.

It should be added here, however, that Voronsky, being a communist, claimed that these accumulated experiences residing in the subconscious are always class experiences, so that subconsciously man represents his belonging and adherence to his own class. To alter or to eradicate the class peculiarity of these experiences is impossible.[14]

Esthetics was one of the disciplines which did not need to undergo a total conceptual readjustment in the thirties as did, for example, psychology. Esthetics was forced, however, to become 'an ideological device or instrument in the re-education of people and in the organisation,

[13] V. M. Friche, 'Freidizm i iskusstvo', *Problemy iskusstvovedenia* (Moscow, 1930), pp. 46–65; A. V. Lunacharsky, *Osnovy pozitivnoi estetiki* (Moscow, 1923).

[14] See his 'Iskusstvo kak poznanie zhizni i sovremennosti', *Krasnaia nov*, August 1923; *Iskusstvo i zhizn* (Moscow, 1924); *Ob iskusstve* (Moscow, 1925).

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mobilisation and activisation of their revolutionary, militant consciousness'.[15] Esthetics, which during the twenties still maintained relative independence within the intellectual framework of Soviet life, was now subordinated to the *dicta* of the Communist Party.

SOVIET esthetics explains human creativity almost exclusively in terms of consciousness. Any creative act which cannot be explained in terms of conscious understanding is regarded as abnormal, psychotic, and hence non-artistic. The number of terms designating the unconscious, subconscious, non-conscious, non-realised, and the like, in Soviet esthetical works is indeed very great. Here are a few: irrationalism, mysticism, psychic abnormality, pathological vision, subjectivism, absolute caprice, delirious phantasy, subjective arbitrariness.

These terms, employed as a rule in an adverse sense, are used in Soviet esthetics about art which transcends the limits of officially approved convention, and which, supposedly, originates in the unconscious.

What, then, is this unconscious? Soviet esthetics does not define it in any positive terms. The references made to it imply that the unconscious is some kind of psychic monstrosity which, if left unbridled by consciousness, would manifest itself in various types of perversion and degeneration. Therefore it has to be suppressed. But how? Here Soviet esthetics is in real trouble. It must speak about suppression but it cannot describe the mechanism of suppression in the positive, objective terms it should use because such a description would indirectly recognise the unconscious as a valid psychic function. Soviet esthetics, therefore, resorts to *Sprachmagie*. It declares the unconscious unreal and unrealistic. Real, and hence allowable, is only what fits into approved convention, what enhances such convention, and what is advantageous to the collective.

While treating the unconscious in this way, the Soviet view nevertheless does in a certain sense remind us of depth psychologies which also conceive of it as antithetical to consciousness and as something which must be kept under constant control and censorship. Its kinship with depth psychology, and particularly Freudianism, was suggested by early Soviet psychologists. Freudianism, they stated, emphasises the opposition between the two psychological spheres, the conscious and the unconscious, and their eventual resolution on a new plane. The analogy with dialectical materialism, which terms such opposition and eventual resolution as thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, is obvious[16] The attempt to compare Freudianism with dialectical materialism came to an end by 1930.

> . . . by 1930 the psychoanalytic movement in the USSR came to a practical end and the publication of psychoanalytic material . . .

[15] Todor Pavlov, *Pytanya teoriyi ta istoriyi literatury* (Kiev, 1959), p. 26.

[16] See, for example, W. Reich, 'Dialektischer Materialismus und Psychoanalyse', *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus*, 1929, No. 7–8; S. L. Rubinshtein, *Osnovy obshchei psikhologii* (Moscow, 1940), p. 67; A. R. Luria, 'Die moderne russische Psychologie und die Psychoanalyse', *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, 1928, vol. 12.

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> ceased *in toto*. To this day the hostility to Freudianism and related concepts continues unremittingly. Freudianism is now either ignored or, if noticed, only criticised as an 'idealistic, metaphysical and reactionary science, displaying the methodological faults of biologism, psychologism, or individualism', these three defects characterizing its application to major aspects of man and society.[17]

The control and inhibition of the unconscious, Soviet estheticians contend, is performed by the human mind or consciousness. 'Mind has a great significance in the creative abilities of the artistic talent'.[18] 'Art is impossible without selection and generalisation of the facts of the real world. It is unthinkable merely on the basis of unconscious feelings, emotional acquisition, merely on the basis of the so-called artist's intuition'.[19] The human mind 'guards the artist from the subjective image which can arise in his imagination by virtue of certain conditions of life experience'.[20] Thus the creative response, like any other response, must be mediated through the conscious goal which, in turn, must be consonant with the intentions of the Communist party.

> The creative imagination is continuously controlled by the artist, is tested by the goal-directed observation of life. The artist juxtaposes the images created by artistic imagination with reality, their logic with the logic of life, with typical circumstances. Therefore the images which emerge in the imagination of an artist on the basis of his intention are subsequently, in one way or another, carved and concretised in accordance with the truth of life.[21]

While in the West we describe the mechanism of the relationship between conscious and unconscious by various terms, depending upon what particular school of psychology we adhere to, Soviet psychologists and estheticians speak of this relationship as the dialectics of the objective and subjective. This means that, functionally, the subjective and objective factors are aspects of each mental or psychic act. Each minute perception of concrete reality contains in itself these two factors, so that each ideation, each conceptualisation, and each creative act is 'the subjective image of the objective thing'. What *is* objective, nobody except the Communist party knows for certain.

'The primary criterion for validating a scientific theory is the exercise of party vigilance'.[22] In the area of creative arts, this criterion is not always easy to determine. What is today recognised as objective may tomorrow be denounced as subjective by the same party.

[17] I. D. London, 'A Survey of Psychology in the Soviet Union', *Psychological Bulletin*, July 1949, p. 264.
[18] *Osnovy* . . . op. cit., p. 363.
[19] P. S. Trofimov, 'Kritika osnovnykh napravlenii v sovremennom burzhuazno-reaktsionnom iskusstve i estetike', *Voprosy marksistko-leninskoi estetiki* (Moscow, 1956), p. 352.
[20] *Osnovy* . . . op. cit., p. 362.
[21] Ibid. p. 361.
[22] R. A. Bauer, op. cit., p. 104.

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HOW then does the creator know that he is subjectively reflecting objective reality? There is a series of criteria by which he should validate his creative process as truly developing in accordance with Lenin's theory of reflection. One such criterion is the conscious attempt to ' re-create reality ' in ' all its concreteness, in all its live, real forms '.[23] Another is that reality must be re-created ' in the spirit of the truth of life '.[24] But since all truth is relative, the truth which must permeate the artistic re-creation of reality by the Soviet artist must serve the interests of the proletariat. The corollary to this second criterion is to see, to analyse, and to judge reality from the standpoint of the proletarian truth, which is the closest approximation to absolute truth. This the creator should do even if he has to ' transform himself, to give up himself and his personal interests '.[25] In sum, the creator can achieve objectivity only and exclusively through disinterestedness (*bezkorystnost*), through suppression of himself and his inner being. The truth resides in the collective and not in the individual. Search for truth, other than collective, inevitably leads to estrangement, subjectivism, and entanglement in the web of one's own unconsciousness. In such a world there is no originality or creative inspiration. Only in ' intercourse with the world, in activity, and not in the innermost recesses of one's soul is inspiration born '. The Soviet creator is requested and required by the Communist party to learn the proletarian truth which will ' guard him from subjectivism and lead him to the affirmation of the truth of the reflected world and its true valuation '. To escape the trap of one's own unconscious, the basis of creation should be ' the real world '. No true creator can be independent of reality, free of the ' task to reflect it truly '. Thus the visible, the perceivable, and above all, the politically approvable, reality is and must be the content of Soviet art. Such reality is the ' highest criterion of creativity '.[26]

It is interesting to note here that so-called revisionism in esthetics, represented primarily by the eminent Marxist intellectual, George Lukacs, is directed primarily at the Soviet cultivation of consciousness to the total neglect of psychic forces outside it. Lukacs, for example, writes that ' the social ties are captured by the creator not consciously but spontaneously '.[27] By ' spontaneous ' Lukacs means, more or less, what Gestalt psychologists call ' instantaneous ', i.e., that unconscious organisation of apperception which, as it reaches consciousness, suits the exigencies of the moment. Creativity limited to pure rational act is, Lukacs thinks, impossible. He even goes so far as to say that ' one who is in a position to control the development of his images cannot be a genuine realist, a significant writer '.[28] He goes on to speak about the ' internal development of images ', a process which has very little to do with conscious aims or

[23] L. I. Timofeyev, *Osnovy teorii literatury*, pp. 87, 97.
[24] *Osnovy* . . . op. cit., p. 386.
[25] L. I. Timofeyev, op. cit., p. 42.
[26] *Osnovy* . . . op. cit., pp. 369, 385, 361, 359, 386.
[27] George Lukacs, ' Zur Konkretisirung der Besonderheit als Kategorie der Ästhetik ', *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, 1956, vol. 4, p. 421.
[28] George Lukacs, ' Balzac und französische Realismus ', *Aufbau* (Berlin, 1952), p. 14.

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goals. On the contrary, the 'internal development of images' might easily set itself against consciousness. In short, what Lukacs is stating is that, in creation, the subliminal, or the unconscious processes, are dominant. Curtailment of such processes is equivalent to the reduction or complete elimination of creativity. This view is diametrically opposed to that of Timofeyev quoted above: 'The artist, if necessary, should transform himself, should give up himself and his personal interests'. Lukacs argues that 'when the internal artistic development of images begins to contradict the prejudices or even the holy convictions which great writers may cherish, they will without hesitation throw aside such prejudices and convictions and depict what they actually see'.

AS against this conscious regulation, the creative process in bourgeois art, Soviet estheticians assert, runs rampant. The subjective, the unconscious is let loose; instead of being inhibited, it inhibits reality; instead of re-creating this reality, it perverts and deforms it. This, they continue, is true of practically all artistic trends or schools. They all 'attempt to reduce the conscious processes to a minimum and present art as a product of pure intuition, irrational inspiration, and subconscious stimuli'.[29] Bourgeois schools of art are 'pure form plus the unconscious'.[30] Bourgeois art deliberately rejects the power of the mind to dominate the unconscious[31]; it allows the unconscious to project itself into an object of description in various pathological forms, delirious nightmares and hallucinations. The result of such an uninhibited approach towards unconsciousness is that the creative process 'reduces itself to such a level that it loses the right to be called a human activity'.[32]

All bourgeois art, because of its heavy exploitation of unconsciousness, lacks content. If, however, there is some content in it, then it is blurred by irrationalism, mysticism, and abnormality. Any content which is asocial or apolitical, no matter how well it may be shaped and presented, cannot be considered as true content. Such works are empty, without object (*nesoderzhatelny*). Thus, while Soviet art is a subjective reflection of objective reality, bourgeois art is a subjective reflection of subjective phenomena, with no worthy subject-matter or content. The so-called 'subjective, arbitrary, undetermined, immanent activity of an individual subject, or the emancipation of the inner "I" of the creator',[33] cannot be considered a true content of art. Its search for content in 'the fantastic, unreachable, transcendental spheres' predetermines its death.[34]

Soviet esthetics persists in such views; but its verbal rejection of bourgeois art as empty, without content, reminds us of Freud's definition of

[29] *Osnovy* . . . op. cit., p. 363.
[30] Sidney Finkelstein, 'Khudozhnik i evo mir', *Voprosy filosofii*, 1958, vol. 7, p. 58.
[31] B. R. Vipper, 'Siurrealizm i evo amerikanskie apologety', *Protiv burzhuaznovo izvrashcheniia iskusstva i iskusstvovedenia* (Moscow, 1951), p. 23.
[32] *Osnovy* . . . op. cit., p. 375.
[33] V. Vanslov, *Soderzhanie i forma v iskusstve* (Moscow, 1956), p. 8.
[34] Iannis Imriotis, 'Abstraktnoe iskusstvo', *Voprosy filosofii*, 1960, No. 11, p. 82.

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words, which throws light upon this strange and obsessive Soviet insistence. 'Words and magic were in the beginning one and the same, and even today words retain much of this magical power.' Soviet estheticians may be seen as engaged in a kind of incantation, by means of which they hope to conceal from themselves what exists but what radically contradicts the rationale of their beliefs.

* * *

Although Soviet esthetics claims to be tied to psychological science in its treatment of the creative process or act, it deliberately ignores the factor of the unconscious. When, however, this factor cannot be ignored, it treats it with contempt, anger, and, we suspect, with fear. The communist rulers are perfectly well aware that obedience can be forced or solicited merely on the surface of the human psyche and that beyond the limits of consciousness man remains disobedient, even to himself. To master the unconscious of man and thus achieve total control over him is a scientific utopia. Despairing of achieving this control, the Communist Party resorts to suppression, and this it does with persistence and efficiency.

Soviet esthetics may be right in stating that in Western arts there is a lot of 'absolute arbitrariness of subjective experiences' or what Vipper calls 'glorification of the animal instincts in man'; but without such arbitrariness art is dead. Soviet esthetics demands that art shall 'reflect, incorporate the general, objective laws of life, the special laws of art',[35] and through such a demand destroys it *in statu nascendi*; Western esthetics does not demand anything of art. It observes and describes, and thus not only remains scientific, but also shows respect for art and so justifies its existence.

[35] Todor Pavlov, *Pytanya* . . . op. cit., p. 63.

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BORIS PILNYAK

Peter Wilson

FROM the publication of his first major work, *The Naked Year*, and other stories in the early 1920s, Boris Pilnyak was regarded as one of the most promising young Soviet writers by Trotsky and other, less exalted, critics. *The Naked Year* is a series of tenuously related episodes showing the activity and aspirations of various groups of people—anarchists, bolsheviks, and a decadent noble family—in a provincial town during 1919, the 'naked year'.

The ideas in the book amount to a series of antitheses. The long-established, easy-going way of life in the provinces and the anarchical spirit of peasant communities are opposed to urban order and city administration. Donat, a peasant sectarian, says, 'We came to these parts in Catherine's reign, and we live as we did thirty years ago, and a hundred; we manage ourselves in our own way. So we don't need any governments, or wars either. Petersburg is like a skin disease'. The Russian medieval past is preferred to the reforms introduced by Peter the Great from Europe, and Pilnyak sees the revolution as the rejection of the European element in Russia and the assertion of the will of the people, following the tradition of rebellion established by Stepan Razin and Pugachev. Gleb Ordynin, a nobleman in decline, refers to his travels in Europe and then says:

> European culture is a dead end. For the last two centuries, since Peter, Russian statesmen have wanted to take that culture. Russia languished for want of air, just as Gogol saw it. And the revolution has opposed Russia to Europe. What's more, immediately after the first days of the revolution, the towns of Russia went back to the seventeenth century in spirit and in their way of life.

Bolshevism is differentiated from communism as something originally Russian from something artificial and European, but Pilnyak never ventures to discuss political theory. Indeed, we may assume that his attitude to it is shown in this passage, put into the mouth of Yagorka, a sort of wise man among the peasants:

> At a meeting I said, 'There's no such thing as the International, but there is a revolution of the Russian people, a rebellion and nothing more. Just like Stepan Razin'. 'What about Karl Marx?' they asked. 'A German', I said, 'and therefore a fool'. 'And Lenin?' 'Lenin', I said, 'comes from the peasants, he's a Bolshevik, and I suppose you're communists. You ought to ring all the church bells at being liberated from the yoke. Land to the peasants! Merchants get out! . . . . Communists get out too! The Bolsheviks'll manage by themselves', I said. Well, they put me in the glasshouse straight away for discipline.

This romantic attitude of Pilnyak's, his predilection for what was indigenous and local, is expressed also in an implicit preference for the

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life of instinct, close to nature. Volkovich, an ex-officer, and Irina, of unknown antecedents, live only for the present, the past forgotten and the future unregarded. They enjoy the chaos engendered by the revolution, since it has released them from the obligation to bring order and purpose into their lives. Irina writes in her diary:

> Damn humanism and ethics—I want to drink up everything I've got through my freedom, intellect, and instinct—yes, and instinct—because isn't the present a struggle of instinct?

Volkovich escapes arrest by the Cheka and goes to live with a group of anarchists:

> Freedom! Freedom! To have nothing, to refuse everything, to be a beggar! and nights, and days, dawns, the sun, and heat, and fog, storms—not to know tomorrow's day.

It is not surprising that the Bolsheviks are the least convincing set of characters in the book: they are treated as the personification of mindless energy and are shown in one episode only, when they restore a metallurgical plant to working order. Pilnyak sees them as 'the pick of the rough, mellow Russian people', adding that they could not be softened with 'the lemonade of psychology' and that none of them had read Marx. Only one of their number, Arkhip Arkhipov, is singled out. He is ridiculed by the author for attempting to educate himself with scientific textbooks and Marx's *Capital*. Compared with the Ordynins, a noble family who are so decadent as to be almost farcical and yet clearly have the author's sympathy, the Bolsheviks in *The Naked Year* are very colourless.

THE most impressive passage in the book describes a train journey into the steppes. The train is packed with starving people travelling from the cities under appalling conditions of filth and disease for days and nights on end to seek food in the steppe villages, and to exchange whatever possessions they have for it. Pilnyak was fascinated by this struggle for existence, where the animal instincts in man were the only motivating forces. According to V. Polonsky (*Ocherki sovremennoy literatury*, Moscow, 1930), the nearest experience Pilnyak had of the revolution was such forays by train and he came to identify it with the whole of revolutionary Russia. He says himself that he travelled a great deal at that time, engaged in *meshechnichestvo*, or the hunt for food; he saw, it seems, little or nothing of Petrograd and Moscow, the urban centres whence the revolution spread. This may account for his inability to appreciate its proletarian, urban context. Both Polonsky and Trotsky (in *Literatura i revolyutsiya*, Moscow, 1923) point out that he makes no mention of the Red Army either, which was playing such a decisive part in the fate of the country, because he had not been to the civil-war fronts.

In his chapter on Pilnyak, Trotsky remarked that he wrote about the revolutionary birth pangs without knowing what was being born, that he accepted and in his own way acclaimed the revolution, without

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being able to justify it artistically, since he did not comprehend the ideas behind it. Because of this, Trotsky dubbed him 'not an artist of the revolution, but only an artistic fellow-traveller'. With particular reference to *The Naked Year*, Trotsky goes on:

> Even now Pilnyak does not present a picture of the revolution, but only its base and background. He has laid on the base with good bold strokes, but what a pity if the master should decide that the background is the whole picture. The October Revolution is urban, it is Petersburg and Moscow. 'The revolution is still going on', remarks Pilnyak in passing. But the further work of the revolution will be directed towards industrialisation and modernisation of the economy, the refinement of methods of construction in all fields, the eradication of the idiocy of village life. . . . It would be a pity if Pilnyak should become the poet of the tinder-box with the pretensions of a revolutionary. There is of course no political harm in this—who would dream of dragging Pilnyak into politics?—but the most real and immediate artistic danger.

Who indeed? This last remark of Trotsky's assumes great significance in the light of what was to come.

IN 1924 Pilnyak wrote an autobiographical sketch. His real name was Wogau, his father, a veterinary surgeon, being a descendant of the Volga Germans. His mother came of a Saratov merchant family and had been trained as a teacher in Moscow. Both parents were sympathisers of the 'narodnik' movement. He was born in 1894 and spent his childhood and youth in provincial towns of the Moscow *guberniya* and his parents' home region by the Volga, surrounded, in his own words, by nature and living in the milieu of *zemstvo* members, intelligentsia, and peasants. He began to write at the age of nine, but considered 1915 as the beginning of his literary career, when he had various stories and nature sketches published in periodicals. He finished his schooling in Nizhny Novgorod in 1913, and in 1920 completed a course in economics at the Moscow Commercial Institute. The years of the revolution were spent in Kolomna and afterwards he travelled widely in Russia. In 1922 he visited Germany and in the following year England.

Stylistically, the works he wrote between 1920 and 1923 owe much to Andrey Bely, from whom Pilnyak took his 'poetic' prose, with its juxtaposition of the most heterogeneous subjects, flights of fancy, abrupt transitions in time and place, and typographical idiosyncrasies. It is as if the reader were on a magic carpet and could look in on scenes in the life of complete strangers, sometimes coming across someone he had seen before and half-remembered. This chaotic manner of writing is carried to extremes in *Ivan and Marya*, written in 1921.

In this case, the narrative has two distinct threads. One concerns a writer who makes a train-journey to Moscow, after spending the years of the revolution in the countryside, to find that his sister has died there.

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He visits a hospital, a cemetery, a writers' club, a church, and a book-dealer. Soon after his return to his country home he finds he is threatened with arrest, but there the story breaks off. The heroine is Ksenya Ordynina, who is connected in the author's mind with the nobleman's family of *The Naked Year*. She is the head of the local Cheka and for her the revolution means unlimited scope for the indulgence of sexual appetite, with the refinement that she can have her lovers arrested and shoot them herself, a sort of Soviet Tamara.

Another story, *Mother Damp Earth*, which was written in 1924 and is free of Bely's influence, deals with communist attempts at constructive activity. Nekuliev, a trained communist, is sent to prevent large-scale looting of timber from state-owned forests along the Volga. He tries to convince the peasants, who regard the timber as their own, of the economic necessity of conservation and planned felling, but to no avail. An assistant whom he trusts takes him to a meeting of peasants who intend to lynch him, but he escapes. The ignorance, superstition, and squalor of peasant life are described in vivid detail. Although the figure of Nekuliev is rather flat, because Pilnyak's sympathy is again with the peasants and their anarchical spirit in the conflict with the forces of order, this story is one of his best, free of the disjointedness of most of the earlier works.

From 1925–26 on, Pilnyak tended to neglect such controversial subjects as these, probably because of the trouble he found himself in as a result of his *Tale of the Unextinguished Moon*, which is subtitled, far more appropriately, 'The Murder of the Army Commander'. The hero, Gavrilov, is described as one of the outstanding leaders of the Red Army and a well-known public figure. He comes to Moscow in his personal train on orders from above, and reads in the newspapers that he has returned in order to undergo an operation. He had suffered from stomach ulcers, but had recovered and now felt perfectly well. He goes to see someone designated as the most important of the three leaders of the party (' *troika, kotoraya vershila* ') who virtually orders him to have an operation. Gavrilov is then examined by doctors who state in their official report that an operation is necessary, but later admit in private conversation that it was not. Gavrilov undergoes the operation and dies from an overdose of chloroform. From the beginning there is an atmosphere of mystery—Gavrilov has a foreboding that he is to die—and there is a feeling of an unknown evil force at work.

This story was clearly inspired by the death in November 1925, in similar circumstances, of Frunze, who had succeeded Trotsky as Commissar for War. It was printed in *Novy Mir* but before it was published literary circles in Moscow had learnt that Pilnyak had written a story dealing with Frunze's death. Pilnyak strongly denied that there was any connection, but Voronsky, the editor of *Krasnaya Nov*, to whom he had dedicated the story, wrote to the editors of *Novy Mir* rejecting the dedication on the ground that the story purported to give the actual circumstances of Frunze's death and called it a 'malicious slander on our

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Party'. The issue of *Novy Mir* containing the story was confiscated on the order of the GPU and in the following number the editors were obliged to admit that the publication of the story had been a bad mistake. *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon*, however, was published separately in Sofia in 1927 with a foreword giving its history.

IF Pilnyak had had any political sense at all, he would have realised that it would be unwise to publish such a story, which suggested that Stalin himself was responsible, deliberately or not, for Frunze's death. After returning home from China and Japan, which he visited in 1926 with the object of meeting Japanese writers and establishing the Japanese branch of the Russo-Japanese Literary Society, he had, according to Trotsky's biography of Stalin, to express publicly his humble repentance for the political harmfulness of *The Tale of the Unextinguished Moon.*

Pilnyak openly admitted his lack of interest in politics in a contribution which he made to a collection called *Writers About Art and About Themselves* (1924), before writers had been brought into a state of complete subjection to the party. He asserted that he was not a communist and therefore would not admit that he should write like one, and that the destiny of the Russian Communist Party was far less interesting to him than that of Russia. He said also that he could not write otherwise than as he did and would not do so. These are brave words, but he did not know the true strength of the forces against him until some years later.

A book called *The Roots of the Japanese Sun* was the fruit of his visit to Japan. It is a mixture of documentary description, impressions, and meditations, often very dull, with much repetition, and too much of a rag-bag to be a success. In a later book, *Rocks and Roots*, written after a second visit to Japan in 1932, he repudiated much of what he said in the first.

Most of the stories written in the period 1925–28 deal with situations remote from everyday Soviet life. *Zavolochye* is an account of an actual scientific expedition to the Arctic; *Ivan Moskva* concerns the life of a mineralogist at a plant in the barren Komi region and the impact of electricity and wireless on the superstitious native inhabitants. There are stories of the Volga German community and many deriving from Pilnyak's travels in the Far East. *Springs and Clay* ('Rasskaz o klyuchakh i gline') describes the voyage from Odessa of some East European Jews emigrating to Palestine, with vivid evocations of the history and monuments of the countries they pass by. *A Push into Life* ('Shtoss v zhizn') deals with Lermontov's life in the Caucasus and seems to have been inspired by a visit to the health resort of Pyatigorsk.

Pilnyak was a great traveller. In all his works there is a strong feeling for the physical aspect of a place, its climate, its significance in history. It may be that in his travels he was attempting to escape from increasing pressure to toe the line in literature. Perhaps he thought that

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by concentrating on such non-partisan subjects, which could have no political undertones, he could avoid giving offence.

But that he had to return to the old Russia he loved and to write about it, without consideration of the possible consequences, is shown by the publication in 1929 of *Mahogany*. At this time Pilnyak was president of the All-Russian Union of Writers, which was a genuine association of authors trying to maintain their independence of party control in the face of the encroaching Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), which had been formed in 1925 and was in effect the instrument for bureaucratic control of literature. Pilnyak and Zamyatin were two major writers who had so far refused to give up their individuality to become purveyors of the party line. To force them to do so, and to bring other independent writers to heel, it was first necessary to destroy their political reputations.

Pilnyak's *Mahogany* offered an excellent pretext. It seems to be the last considerable work where he was really himself; that is to say, where he treated in the way he wished subjects which had his full sympathy. There is the same hankering for the past found in *The Naked Year*, and the same emphasis on characters who were out of touch with present reality. The narrative concerns two brothers, the Bezdetovs, antique-dealers, who go to a provincial town to buy up antiques. They stay with Yakov Karpovich Skudrin, an old man who had been a representative for peasant affairs, and his family. Skudrin's brother Ivan lives out his own idea of true communism with some other ' ochlocrats ' in an underground dugout near a brick kiln:

> The communists sleeping here had been called up in the period of war communism and released in 1921. They were men whose ideas had come to a stop, lunatics and drunkards, men who in their underground home and in their labour, unloading barges and sawing up wood, had established the strictest brotherhood and the strictest communism, possessing nothing of their own—neither money, nor objects, nor wives; anyhow, their wives had left them and their dreams, their ravings and alcohol.

The old man's son Akim also visits the town. He is described as a Trotskyist who had missed the train of time. In a discussion between him and Ivan, the latter remarks that all Leninists and Trotskyists were being expelled from the party. Akim and Ivan are indeed hopelessly out of touch with party policy of the late 1920s.

The opening and concluding chapters of the novel have, superficially, little to do with the rest. The first is an account of the death in Moscow in the middle of the nineteenth century of a famous *yurodivy* and the antics of his disciples, followed by reflections on Russian peasant craftsmen and various styles of Russian furniture. The last chapter is mostly concerned with the position of peasant farmers under collectivisation, but closes with an account of the first Russian china factory and the actual craftsmen who worked there. All these things represented for Pilnyak the old Russia which had passed away with the revolution and

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is symbolised by the antique mahogany furniture whence the story has its title.

His characters themselves are relics of this old Russia. The Skudrin family is described as living in a medieval manner. Ivan Skudrin is a contemporary *yurodivy*:

> Ivan Karpovich rambled on—he talked about his commune and how he had been the first chairman of the executive committee, what those years had been like and how they had passed, those terrible years; how afterwards he had been thrown out of the revolution and was now going amongst the people to make them weep, remember, and love; again he talked about his commune, the equality and fraternity in it,—he asserted that communism was primarily love, the intense care of man for man, friendship, comradeship, co-operation.

Ivan calls his brother and sister-in-law the personification of historic counter-revolution. The only character in the book who represents some hope for the future is Claudia, a schoolteacher, old Skudrin's niece. She is strong and independent, and is expecting a fatherless child as the result of her explicit decision to become a mature woman. In this she expects the state to help her. She is similar to many of Pilnyak's earlier heroines, such as Irina in *The Naked Year* and Ksenya Ordynina. Claudia herself and her elder married sister are both illegitimate children. Their mother, Kapitolina, had a married man for a lover, suffered disgrace and was cast out by her brother, old Skudrin, and by society. Yet now she lives a happy old age, content with her family, sharing a house with Rimma, her sister, who had remained an old maid, having lived all her life virtuously in the framework of provincial morals, 'the wine of her life turned sour'.

The most objectionable features of the story, in the eyes of the literary bureaucracy, were the leaning towards Trotskyism, the criticism of certain aspects of Soviet life, and the propounding of a heretical theory by Yakov Skudrin:

> Marx's theory about the proletariat must soon be forgotten, because the proletariat itself must disappear—that's my idea—so the whole revolution was in vain, a mistake of history. Yes, because two or three generations more and the proletariat will disappear—first in the United States, England, and Germany. Marx wrote his theory in an epoch when muscular labour was flourishing. Now machines are taking the place of muscles. That's my idea. Soon there'll be only engineers by the machines, and the proletariat will disappear, they'll all change into engineers.

Pilnyak describes how higher officials in local government and industry would re-elect each other or swop posts each year, and digresses on the gross industrial inefficiency and wastage. He adds that, in view of their closed interests and the isolation of their life from the rest of the population, the higher authorities were of no account in the story.

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Mahogany was published in Berlin for copyright reasons. It was quite normal for Soviet writers to arrange for their works to appear abroad before being issued in the USSR. But in the autumn of 1929 Pilnyak was accused, in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, of having written an anti-Soviet novel, and, on its alleged rejection by the censors, of having arranged with a 'White Guard' publisher to issue it abroad. In a letter which he wrote to the editors Pilnyak gave the facts of the matter, adding that *Mahogany* was to have been printed in *Krasnaya Nov*, admittedly with some cuts. He complained about the atmosphere of persecution in which he found himself. His letter was ignored and further charges hurled at him, while the RAPP called upon the Writers' Union to dismiss him as their president. This they did, while *Literaturnaya Gazeta* went on calling Pilnyak every dirty name under the Soviet sun.

ACCORDING to Max Eastman's *Artists in Uniform*, Pilnyak was driven to the idea of suicide by the viciousness of the attack on him, and asked Gronsky, the editor of *Izvestiya*, to intercede for him. Gronsky suggested that he should re-write *Mahogany* to deal with socialist construction under the first five-year plan as a sop to his persecutors. In response to this advice, Pilnyak produced *The Volga Flows into the Caspian Sea*, which dealt with the building of a dam at Kolomna, the town where he had written many of his early works, and shows technical progress against a background of the old, provincial Russia which was his favourite theme. There could be nothing so directly opposed to the spirit in which a five-year plan is presumably tackled than the whole spirit of *Mahogany*, and the divergence remains quite clear in the novel in which the latter was incorporated. The figures of Yakov and Ivan Skudrin are retained. It is hardly surprising that the novel was found unsatisfactory. The *Literaturnaya Entsiklopedia* of 1934 criticises Pilnyak's sympathy for Ivan and the artificial nature of the figures of the engineer and the professor who should have been representatives of the new Soviet man.

Pilnyak's *Collected Works* were published in eight volumes between 1929 and 1930. His later works add nothing to his stature, since in these he had to keep his imagination within bounds and treated his subjects in the style of reportage or propaganda. He wrote a book on Tajikistan, which was to show the benefits brought by Soviet rule to an Asiatic people, and after a visit to America in 1931 produced a so-called American novel entitled *Okay*. It is in fact anything but a novel, consisting largely of straight-forward reports of what he saw and anti-American propaganda.

What was probably his last long work, *The Ripening of the Fruit* ('Sozrevaniye plodov'), was published in 1936. This, again, is written in the first person and deals with his latest travels in the Soviet Union. Even here he retains a spark of the individuality which even the most adverse circumstances could not destroy, and his love of old Russia

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comes out in some long chapters on the icon-painters of Palekh and on monks and monasteries.

It seems quite certain, though there has never been any official announcement, that Pilnyak was executed in the purges of 1937–38. There are references to his death in the works of R. Ivanov-Razumnik (*Pisatelskie sudby*, New York, 1951; *Tyurmy i ssylki*, New York, 1953). According to these, Pilnyak was shot in the Butyrskaya prison in Moscow as a Japanese spy, which would be the most appropriate charge against him in the eyes of the NKVD. However this may be, his name has been allowed to sink into oblivion. There is no entry in the *Bolshaya Sovietskaya Entsiklopedia*, although he was an outstanding figure in Soviet literature.

His earlier stories, i.e., those written between 1919 and 1923, are as a whole the most interesting, since they present an imaginative picture of the effects of the revolution in the provinces. The imaginative element in his work suffers a progressive decline, *Mahogany* apart, until in the thirties it is totally absent.

In spirit, his work is opposed to the time in which he lived, when the emphasis of party policy was on reconstruction and later on collectivisation of agriculture and industrialisation. Pilnyak felt for humanity and individuals and seems to have been untouched by these superhuman developments. Neither political theory nor the Communist Party was of interest to him, and it was this indifference which so infuriated those who wanted literature to serve party ends. Writing in 1930, Gorki pleaded for a more enlightened approach on the part of the literary bureaucracy to writers such as Pilnyak who made 'mistakes'. Pilnyak, he said, was 'by reason a socialist, but by feeling an individualist', and, he might have added, a romantic.

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RECENT UKRAINIAN WRITING

A. de Vincenz

THE thaw in the Ukraine got under way, as elsewhere, in 1956, with the rehabilitation of some second-rate communist writers; later many others were cleared; most of them were dead, but the few who had survived were allowed to return from exile. The most interesting was a man who did not have to be cleared since he had never been condemned, the film producer Dovzhenko. He was allowed to return to Kiev inconspicuously and even to relate his childhood memories in Ukrainian (in the paper *Dnipro*, No. 4 1956). These memoirs, called *The Enchanted Desna River,* are remarkable for the total absence of cliché. They can be compared to Ehrenburg's recently published autobiography, although their literary value is probably higher, being less concerned with literary history or cultural politics. Indeed, they seem to be the only example of art for art's sake published in the Ukraine, and perhaps in the Soviet Union, at that time. Unfortunately, Dovzhenko died in 1959.

At about the same time some of the less timid critics directed their attention to the twenties. Thus S. Kryzhanivsky in *Literaturna Hazeta* (May–June 1956):

> Our entire conception of what was happening in literature between 1917 and 1930 must be revised. Up till now everything that had been written about literature in the Ukraine in the first years after the October Revolution has in fact been restricted to two or three names. Of course this does not correspond to reality. Actually, it was an eventful period with a great number of diverse currents and schools, with dozens and hundreds of writers. . . . It is no secret that a number of talented Soviet writers have been for various reasons excluded from consideration.

Still, Kryzhanivsky did not propose any new names except those of the four or five communists already reinstated.

In June, too, there appeared in the Kiev paper *Radyanska Kultura* (Soviet Culture) an article by the poet Rylsky called ' Beauty ':

> Not long ago a group of writers, literary critics, painters, etc., were talking about the ways of development of Soviet art (including literature). Suddenly somebody pronounced the word ' Beauty '. Everyone started. It could indeed be said that we had forgotten the word.

Such incidents only reflected an atmosphere which itself was more tempestuous. One contributory factor was the renewal of contacts with the West. In 1959 English composers and Western writers came to Kiev (among others Alberto Moravia); there was an exhibition of French books and reproductions, not only of the Impressionist (proscribed till then in the Soviet Union) like Manet, Gauguin, Van Gogh, but also of modern

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painters like Braque, Dufy, Derain, Matisse, and Picasso. This alone amounted to a cultural revolution. There was also a Rembrandt exhibition, a Belgian film-festival week, etc. Polish writers came without difficulty to Kiev and Lemberg (Lvov). They did not hesitate to criticise everything and everybody, and private talks with them must have added to the literary ferment.

Equally promising was the opportunity for some communist writers and artists to go abroad. Some went to Poland, which was perhaps more dangerous from the Party point of view than going to capitalist countries. But even a visit to the not very rebellious Czechoslovakia could act as a salutary shock. Here is how the writer O. Poltoratsky (born 1905) described his visit to that country: 'How beneficial it could be for our architects to travel to the capitals of other countries and to learn there something useful, instead of dreaming up such unsuccessful squares as, for instance, the one at the beginning of Sverdlov Street in Kiev. In any case, we must put an end to this architectural (and not only architectural) autarky, to this steering only according to our own experience. All this has caused us untold damage in the last years'. Although the acerbity of these words is alleviated by the use of a 'People's Democracy', as model, still it was the first time in twenty-five years that it was publicly proposed to follow the example of someone other than the USSR.

Poltoratsky seems to have been one of those who were sincerely pleased by the thaw, for in an account of a subsequent trip to Paris (*Lit. Hazeta*, 20 September 1956) he reported that the secretary of the (French communist) monthly *Europe* had expressed the desire to print the works of Soviet Ukrainian authors. And although he included the customary critical comments on French 'bourgeois democracy', he concluded with the rather touching acclamation: 'How good it is that we Ukrainian writers may now travel to many countries of the world and come into contact with our progressive colleagues! And how marvellous that our new friends endorse our wish for a meeting with them on the banks of the Dnieper'.

AT the end of 1956 literary committees were formed for publishing works of 'rehabilitated' writers. But it soon became clear that 'rehabilitating' a writer meant only that his name was no longer taboo. It did not mean that his works were automatically off the index. It was still necessary to ask for the 'rehabilitation' of single books. A case in point was that of the dramatist M. Kulish. A committee was formed for reissuing his work, but some of his plays were considered too nationalist to be acceptable. At the end of 1957 he was still being discussed. An article by M. Ostryk condemned his last and perhaps best works, but said *Pathetic Sonata, Maklen a Grassa* and others were still interesting. 'We may expect that our theatres and publishing houses will once more take an interest in the better part of the heritage of this talented Ukrainian playwright and we shall be able to read his original and moving works'. The promised edition of Kulish's works has not

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appeared and one may well ask whether it will ever appear, for in August 1961 an article by the (Russian?) critic Kiselov in *Vitchyzna* (Kiev) 'rehabilitated' only one of his plays ('97'), while condemning *People's Malachias* as 'written under the influence of Khvylovy's disintegrating and nationalistic slogans'. (Khvylovy was a poet and critic who founded the 'Free Academy of Proletarian Literature'.)

At the end of 1956 I. Pyskun, in an article with the significant title 'Life demands it' (*Mystetstvo*, No. 11–12), called for a revision of the history of the Ukrainian theatre: 'It is scientifically incorrect to judge past events by contemporary ideological and literary criteria. . . . An anti-historical attitude of this kind has been taken to the Berezil theatre [the experimental theatre run by L. Kurbas, a disciple of Gordon Craig]. As current needs dictated, Kurbas-ism was condemned either as counter-revolutionary nationalism or stateless cosmopolitanism; these writers rejected everything that at different times was proper to Kurbas' creative experimentation. . . . And yet in the history of the fight for the Soviet theatre, Kurbas' and Yura's *Young Theatre* as well as Kurbas' Berezil played a positive part'.

At the fourth plenary session of the Ukrainian Writers' Union in January 1957 the prevailing mood was expressed by the novelist Nathan Rybak: 'It is time we put our literary household in order. It is time to put an end to a state of affairs in which handbooks and studies present Ukrainian Soviet literature in a one-sided and partial way. It is enough to say that up to the present time the names of numerous writers who played an important part in the development of our literature have been passed over in silence. Mykytenko, M. Kulish, V. Pidmohylny, did much to broaden our cultural contacts, especially with French literature, and their works should not only be reissued but also revalued'.

Other writers, however, violently attacked the 'revisionists' and Ukrainian 'bourgeois nationalists' abroad, while the literary critic L. Novychenko explained that 'social rehabilitation did not always mean full literary rehabilitation; when people are cleared, it does not mean that their ideas are cleared, if these went in a direction that is alien to us'.

Nevertheless, literary criticism was reviving. We may quote one of many examples. In an article entitled 'Scholarly Dishonesty' (*Radyanske Literaturoznavstvo*, March–April 1957), M. M. Potupeyko censured a book on the writer M. Kociubynsky (died 1913) published in Kiev in 1955. The author of the book was severely upbraided for refusing to credit Kociubynsky with any originality and for ascribing all his ideas and plots, even where there was no shadow of proof, to the influence of Gorki. Reference to non-existent sources was condemned and orthodox Soviet clichés ridiculed: Kociubynsky describes a Catholic priest who lifts his cassock slightly in order to jump across a puddle. Here is how the scholar comments on this passage: 'Thus the cover is being torn off the true nature of the servant of the Church (! !)'. The exclamation marks come from Potupeyko, who quoted some absurd passages from the article. Such criticism is perhaps one of the most encouraging

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phenomena, since it shows that some people at least have kept their sense of proportion and are still capable of laughing at the Stalinist style.

It is not unlikely that the opening up of contacts with the West, as well as the influence of Poland, turned the minds of some people (students, young writers) towards some sort of national communism. Allusions to this could be found in *Nashe Slovo*, a Ukrainian-language paper published in Warsaw since 1956. The editors even found it necessary to explain in what claimed to be, and probably was, the answer to readers' letters, that the 'rehabilitation' of the Polish Underground Army (anti-Nazi and anti-Communist) did not mean the 'rehabilitation' of the Ukrainian Underground Army (UPA), whose position was more or less similar.

Ukrainian scholarly publications from the West seem to have found their way into the Ukraine. The East European Fund published in the early fifties the chief national-communist writers such as Kulish and Pidmohylny, as well as an anthology of the 'liquidated' poets. How far these publications influenced or accelerated the thaw in the Ukraine must remain an open question. The fact remains, however, that they were known, since it was deemed necessary to attack them.

In December 1956, at a meeting of the Learned Council of the Ukrainian Academy, the 72-year-old academician O. Biletsky, the only surviving literary historian of standing, was given the job of attacking the *History of Ukrainian Literature*, published that year in New York by a Ukrainian scholar of international renown, D. Cizevsky. The attack was moderate in tone: 'The errors of the book are rooted in the nationalist ideas of the author. His ideas are different from ours. Acquaintance with C.'s books allows Soviet literary historians to see how the history of Ukrainian literature is being incorrectly treated abroad from an enemy standpoint'. (This might be taken as an indirect invitation to Ukrainian critics to read such books.) Similarly, an émigré poet living in Germany, I. Kostetsky, was taken to task for having published in 1955 in Munich a volume of translations from T. S. Eliot. Would such an attack have been made, unless the translation had become known and appreciated in Kiev or Lvov?

HAVING been forced to model their language on Russian for 25 years, Ukrainian writers were at last free to write their own tongue as they wished. With few exceptions (Rylsky, Dovzhenko, and one or two others) they do not seem to have made much use of their new-found freedom. But there was an effort to reintroduce Ukrainian into the cinema. In *Radyanska Kultura* (17 October 1956) K. Stanishevsky complained of the absence of films in the Ukrainian language (most Kiev and Odessa studios make films in Russian). 'The same happens to dubbing. Is it not strange that in the Ukraine one can hear no films in Ukrainian? . . . As for dubbing even the best foreign films, it's no good mentioning it. . . . The Ministry of Culture of the Ukrainian Republic should put an end to this abnormal state of affairs'. It is interesting to

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note that what had been normal for twenty years or so was now called abnormal. The protest seems to have met with success, for according to the Soviet press, most films were being shown in a Ukrainian version in 1957.

The influence of what was happening in Poland may be deduced from an article by M. Rylsky in the Kiev *Lit. Hazeta* (March 1957) deploring the contempt for socialist realism displayed by Polish writers and critics, and condemning such opinions as that of the poet Przybos who was asking for the 'suppression of social-realist slavery in art'. The significant thing about Rylsky's review of the Polish press, however, was that he quoted freely, recording the remark of the poet Jastrun that 'one of the greatest errors of the Union of Polish Writers has been that in the last infamous years that institution has striven to transform writers into political functionaries'. Whatever Rylsky's personal sympathies, it is unlikely that he was taking a roundabout way of acquainting the Ukrainian public with the literary situation in Poland. If he could quote so freely, it was because the public knew even more (Polish papers were at that time on sale in the principal towns of the Soviet Union).

Another attack, far less friendly, came from the pen of V. P. Vyedina, who in the new literary bi-monthly *Radyanske Literaturoznavstvo* (March–April 1957) criticised the older Polish writers as well as the young communist rebels (Woroszylski, the philosopher Kolakowski and others) which suggests that their views were finding some echo in the Ukraine; Vyedina's style is apologetic and defensive.

The influence of modern art, in both literature and painting, was making itself felt by the end of 1956, and it was again Rylsky who was commissioned to attack it. He did it with remarkably little zeal, in the form of a short poem. Here are four lines:

> These senseless tangles of lines,
> All these unthinking and empty things,
> That you in your blind pride
> Call new painting.

However, this was not enough, and Korniychuk did the same job with much more zest and at much greater length in a comedy called *Why the dawn laughed*. The influence of the thaw is clearly felt in its language and style, there are even lyrical passages and it is better than anything Korniychuk had written before. Even though the 'positive heroes' are as unconvincing as ever, the negative ones are occasionally funny.

It is generally agreed that Khrushchev's speech in May 1957 signalled a pause in the thaw, but what was happening in the Ukraine does not seem to bear out this contention. Thus 'rehabilitations' continued until 1958: the most sensational case was certainly the clearing of the emigré poet O. Oles (died 1944 in Prague). This was done in an article by Rylsky (*Lit. Haz.* November 1957), which also apologised for the poet's political sins ('admitting sorrowfully his faults and the misguided steps

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which he was to regret later himself, we must say that he has a place in the history of our culture and that the best of his heritage should belong to our Soviet readers').

A few volumes of 'rehabilitated' writers were published in 1958 and 1959, as well as Tychyna's *Works*, containing a selection of his (very good) pre-1929 Symbolist poems. In 1959 appeared also a volume called *From the Poetry of the Twenties*. It contained some silent 'rehabilitations', much good verse (including some of the Futurists), but nothing from the *Pléiade* writers (Zerov, Fylypovych, Dray-Khmara) who had been executed or exiled, and of course no Khvylovy. The preface by A. Kostenko reveals the high regard in which the poetry of the 'Ukrainian Renaissance' is still held and the need for the Party to combat this popularity: 'One must not idealise the poetry of the twenties and present this period as the "Golden Age" of Soviet (Ukrainian) poetry . . . but one must wage a vigorous struggle against underrating the glorious pages of our Soviet past'. This self-contradictory sentence reflects the dilemma in which the Ukrainian critic finds himself today; the first part of the sentence may be seen as a tribute paid to the Party which allows the critic to try, in the second part, to salvage as much as possible under the label of 'our Soviet past'.

IN January 1958 Sosyura's sixtieth birthday was celebrated and it was found necessary to stress that he was no longer guilty of nationalism. His poem 'Love the Ukraine', published in 1944, had provoked the comment in *Pravda* (16 July 1951) that 'Loving the Ukraine is a survival of nationalism', and Sosyura had recanted. The critic Kyryluk ('Poet of the Revolution', *Radyanska Ukraina*, 5 January 1958) recalled Sosyura's war-time literary activity and summed up by saying: 'In the days of the Great Patriotic War, the well known poem "Love the Ukraine" was written, for which the poet was at one time unjustly criticised. There was nothing nationalist in that poem'.

In April 1958 the editorial board of the literary paper *Vitchyzna* was purged for an 'insufficiently active fight against revisionism'. At the end of 1958 a very second-rate young poet but good communist, A. Malyshko, attacked L. Pervomaysky for his poem 'The Fairy Tale'. The attack was in the best Stalinist style ('it's no good waiting for fairy-tales, *we* are not looking for them, *our* fairy-tales are being carried out', etc.). He also attacked the poet S. Holovanivsky (born 1910) for writing poems in which the new Party line was criticised in 'Aesop-like language'. Ukrainian emigrés were again taken to task for publishing national-communist writers of the twenties and for their 'formalist' literary criticism.

The thaw was over, but writers were trying to preserve some at least of the newly acquired rights. Thus, at the 1959 congress of Ukrainian writers the poet Bazhan, while condemning revisionism and saying that 'comrade Stalin's role should not be neglected', tried to retain some freedom for the Ukrainian language. 'The style of our papers cannot but disturb

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us, as indeed also the way our language is being spoken in public life, as well as the level of scholarly publications on linguistic problems. Nor can we help being disturbed by the recent manifestations in isolated pronouncements, articles, and poems of a tendency to separate artificially the development process of the two brother languages' (the other language being, of course, Russian).

'Artificially separating' the Ukrainian language from the Russian was an offence very much in evidence between 1930 and 1955, and those who advocated it publicly were certainly imprudent. But one may wonder how such a tendency could be manifested in poems, unless what is meant is the use of words and phrases too far removed from Russian.

In 1957 a senior lecturer at Kiev University, Tymoshenko, stated that there were no Ukrainian dictionaries at all: no dictionary of modern usage, no Ukrainian-Russian dictionary, no etymological or historical dictionary of the Ukrainian language (the publication of a historical dictionary by Tymoshenko was stopped at the second volume in the thirties). There were not even Ukrainian-foreign and foreign-Ukrainian dictionaries. Following this and other protests the old *Ukrainian Dictionary* in four volumes by B. Hrinchenko (1907–09) was reprinted in 1958. It appeared with a new three-page preface signed by no less than six academicians (among them the writers Bazhan and Rylsky). They found it necessary to warn the Soviet reader that the dictionary contained 'quite a number of tendentiously chosen illustrative quotations, which reflect an alien and sometimes even enemy ideology'. The reader was asked to use the dictionary with critical judgment, bearing in mind Hrinchenko's ideological position.

A concise Ukrainian-Russian dictionary was promised for the end of 1961. No mention has yet been made of an all-Ukrainian dictionary such as exist for all civilised languages (a *Little Dictionary of Ukrainian Synonyms* appeared in 1960, it has 209 pages in small 8vo, with 4,200 entries). Between 1956 and 1960 a number of studies of the history of the Ukrainian language (fifteenth to nineteenth centuries) appeared, as well as some studies of Ukrainian dialects and two larger books on Ukrainian dialectology, but hardly anything on the modern language. The Academy reprint of the sixteenth-century Ukrainian dictionary by Berynda promised for 1960 has not yet appeared.

The writer's interest in the literary language has not diminished. In 1959 *Vitchyzna* (No. 6) published an article by N. Nastyuk criticising careless journalese and the use of words borrowed from the Russian. Also in 1959 Rylsky wrote an article 'Thoughts about Language' (in the Kiev *Lit. Hazeta*), in which he discussed the faulty use of language, due in fact to 'administrative' influence, such as the neglect of the vocative form (Russian having no vocative, the Ukrainian vocative was proscribed in the thirties). 'It would also be useful to speak about our vocabulary, about the "lists of forbidden words" of which our literary editors quite seriously make use. But we must put it off for another time'. Although the fact that these lists may be mentioned proves that there is no official

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prohibition, it seems that literary editors prefer to be on the safe side.

At the end of 1960, B. Antonenko-Davydovych, discussing the language of three young writers, concluded that they shared a preference for cliché, employed an impoverished vocabulary and a journalistic and administrative style, and neglected Ukrainian idioms, 'which are lacking neither in the classical (i.e. nineteenth century) nor in picturesque popular language'. The writers, 'instead of looking for the necessary expression at home, prefer the line of least resistance, take a familiar Russian idiom, and mechanically translate it into Ukrainian without considering how such a travestied idiom will look in a Ukrainian text'. Thus after a short spell of comparative equality, Ukrainian literature and language seem to have returned to the subordinate position of a provincial language if not exactly a *patois*.

Party control has grown more severe since 1959, but compared with the pre-1954 period the standing of Ukrainian language and literature is much better: taboos have been lifted, young people have become acquainted with the 'Ukrainian Renaissance' as well as with the names of Sartre and Picasso, Ukrainian writers are again being published, work in the field of the Ukrainian language is again going on at the Universities. It remains to be seen what the effect of all this will be on literary creation proper.

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VIEWS AND REVIEWS

THE FATE OF OSIP MANDELSTAM

George Stuckow

IN THE BIOGRAPHY of the remarkable Russian poet Osip Mandelstam there are still many gaps, many blank spaces. The printed sources for it are extremely scanty: even in the post-Stalin edition of the *Little Soviet Encyclopedia* there is no entry about Mandelstam, although the 'M' volume appeared at late as 1959 when many literary 'unpersons' had already been rehabilitated. Even the facts of Mandelstam's earlier life are often little known, or distorted. Thus the Soviet *Literary Encyclopedia*, published in the early 1930s and later withdrawn from circulation (among its sponsors and editors were such 'enemies of the people' as Kamenev and Bukharin), gives wrong information about Mandelstam's studies at the University of St. Petersburg: in point of fact he never graduated from it. A few years ago the late well-known poet Georgy Ivanov, who had known Mandelstam well, in reviewing in *Novy Zhurnal* Mandelstam's *Collected Works*, published in New York under the editorship of Gleb Struve and Boris Filippov, reproached the editors for not saying anything about Mandelstam's marriage and the fact that he had a daughter.[1] But the fact of Mandelstam's marriage had never been mentioned before in any biography. On the other hand, Ivanov's own reminiscences of Mandelstam in his book *Peterburgskie zimy* (Paris, 1928; 2nd ed., New York, 1953) are not free from inaccuracies.

The blanks become even more conspicuous when we come to the last years of Mandelstam's life, and it can hardly be expected that these blanks will be soon filled in. When, nowadays, the physical victims of Stalin's reign of terror are restored to literary life, the details of their last years and the circumstances of their death are discreetly withheld; for them is substituted the euphemistic formula: 'Illegally repressed during the period of the cult of the individual. Rehabilitated posthumously.' Such formulas are to be found, for instance, in many entries in the recently published first volume of the new *Short Literary Encyclopedia*. What would the editors of this Encyclopedia, among whom there are several respected literary scholars, have said if such a formula had been applied in the old Tsarist days in some encyclopedic dictionary to such writers as Polezhaev or Küchelbecker? Perhaps by the time this new Encyclopedia reaches the letter 'M' Khrushchev's 'liberalisation' will have progressed still farther and the now accepted meaningless formula will be widened and made more concrete. But even then we are not likely to be told the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, about the fate of some writers. And the fate of Osip Mandelstam was truly tragic.

His disappearance from literature goes back to 1933. The last work known to have appeared in print was 'A Journey to Armenia', a prose

[1] Mandelstam's widow is apparently still alive. The fate of his daughter is not known.

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work published in *Zvezda* in May 1933.[2] But it was only in the second half of 1934, or even early in 1935, that Mandelstam was actually 'repressed'. His arrest has usually been linked with an epigram he is alleged to have written about Stalin.[3] It has also been associated with some incautious remarks dropped in connection with the assassination of Kirov in December 1934.

In the last few years several copies of Mandelstam's poems written after 1933 have found their way to the West. These copies are partly identical, partly different; most of them are defective, and some seem to contain poems erroneously attributed to Mandelstam. A number of these late poems, including some very remarkable ones, were recently published abroad[4]; the majority remain unpublished. For some years now there has also been some talk about the forthcoming publication of a volume of Mandelstam's poetry in the Soviet Union in the *Biblioteka poeta* series. In 1959 such a publication was even announced, for the end of the year, in the official book-trade bulletin called *New Books* (*Novye knigi*). It did not, however, materialise. But in the last eighteen months rumours about the imminent publication of Mandelstam's poetry have become more and more persistent. Such publication seems now to have been scheduled for the spring of 1963, but so far there has been no official confirmation. Well-known Soviet critics, such as K. Zelinsky and V. Pertsov, have been preparing the ground for such a publication by articles in which they mentioned Mandelstam after a long interval of silence or even spoke of the appeal of his poetry to younger Soviet poets.[5] It is unlikely, however, that even if such a volume is published it will contain all of Mandelstam's poetry. Nor is there any question at present of reissuing his prose or his critical and theoretical literary essays.

From the poems of Mandelstam that have been circulating in typescript of late, one can glean certain facts of his life. Thus, it has become known that by the end of 1934 or beginning of 1935 Mandelstam was exiled to Voronezh. Among the poems printed in *Vozdushnye Puti* those written early in 1934 are datelined 'Moscow', while under those written at the beginning of 1935 we find 'Voronezh'. In some of the typescripts circulated outside Russia the post-1934 poems are divided into two sections entitled 'The First Voronezh Notebook' and 'The Second Voronezh Notebook'. Within these two Notebooks the poems are arranged more or less chronologically; in the first the earliest poems are dated April 1935, and the latest, Winter 1936 (there is, before the end of this period, a rather long chronographical gap which may be accounted

[2] See Osip Mandelstam, *Sobranie sochineniy*. Edited, with introductory articles, by G. P. Struve and B. A. Filippov. New York, Chekhov Publishing House, 1955.

[3] See, for instance, the account given by an anonymous friend of Pasternak in *The New Reasoner* (Spring, 1958).

[4] Fifty-seven poems in the almanach *Vozdushnye Puti, II* (New York, 1962), and five in *Vestnik Russkovo Studencheskovo Khristianskovo Dvizheniya* (Paris, 1962, No. 64).

[5] See, for example, K. Zelinsky, 'Russian Poetry Today', in *Survey*, No. 40 (January 1962). This article was written for an Italian symposium. Pertsov's was published in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* in February 1962.

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for by Mandelstam's temporary imprisonment, though there is no clearcut documentary evidence of that fact).[6]

In the second Notebook the earliest poems are also dated Winter 1936 (in some copies the dates are more specific), and the latest, May 1937 (under many of those late poems there is an exact date and in some copies the place—Voronezh—is often marked). It seems clear therefore that until May 1937 at least Mandelstam lived in exile in Voronezh.[7]

The poems that have so far reached the West do not throw any light on Mandelstam's fate *after* May 1937. No later poems are known to us. The date of his death remained for a long time unknown. The year 1942 was sometimes mentioned, and it was even said that Mandelstam had met his death at the hands of the Germans who killed him as a Jew in one of the concentration camps they overran. This story from the outset lacked plausibility. The year 1940 was also mentioned. It was given not so long ago by Ilya Ehrenburg in the first version of his memoirs as serialised in *Novy Mir* (February 1961). Ehrenburg spoke with great warmth about Mandelstam, describing their meetings in 1920 in Kiev and the Crimea, and their sea trip from the Crimea to the Caucasus, and then their adventurous journey from Tiflis to Moscow, with Mandelstam playing the role of a Georgian diplomatic courier. He was silent, however, about Mandelstam's subsequent fate. The date of Mandelstam's death was given by Ehrenburg on the authority of a Soviet agricultural worker who had recently returned from the Far East and had allegedly been in Vladivostok when Mandelstam died there.

In the meantime, a young American Slavic scholar, who was writing a dissertation on Mandelstam, in reply to an enquiry about the exact date of Mandelstam's death addressed to a Soviet scholarly institution, was told that Mandelstam had died in Vladivostok on 27 December 1938.[8]

If not the exact date, at least the year and the place are now confirmed by the story reaching the present writer from a well-informed source. Here is this story which, if it does not clear up all the facts, shows what a nightmarish and tragic reality is sometimes hidden behind the hypocritical and false Soviet formula about ' illegal repression ' and ' posthumous rehabilitation '[9]:

> According to the information coming from those who saw Mandelstam at the beginning of 1938 at the *tranzitka* (transit camp) in Vladivostok, he had been arrested in Voronezh, along with other deportees, sentenced to five years, and deported to Vladivostok where he was to await the opening of the navigation before he could

6 The same may be true of the second half of 1934 and the very beginning of 1935: for this period there seem to be no poems in existence. It is possible that Mandelstam was first arrested in 1934 and later banished to Voronezh.

7 It is true that in one of the copies there is a poem dated ' January 1937, Moscow ', but this is almost certainly a typing error for 1934: there are many poems dated January 1934, all of them written in Moscow, and several inspired by the death of Andrey Bely.

8 See Gleb Struve, ' Italyanskie obrazy i motivy v poezii Osipa Mandelshtama ', in *Studi in onore di Ettore Lo Gatto e Giovanni Maver* (Rome, 1962). Actually, the date ' 1938 ' had been supplied much earlier by a Soviet literary scholar: it can be found, tucked away in the notes, in the two-volume edition of Alexander Blok's *Works*, edited by Vladimir Orlov (Moscow, 1955), vol. II, p. 817.

9 Incidentally, one of the latest political anecdotes reported from Moscow says that in the future Soviet Constitution there will be a clause guaranteeing posthumous rehabilitation to all Soviet citizens.

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be transferred to one of the permanent camps. During the long deportation (*etapirovanie*) to the Far East he had already begun to show signs of insanity. Suspecting that his guards had received orders from Moscow to poison him, he refused to eat any meals (they consisted of bread, herring, dehydrated cabbage soup, and sometimes a little millet). His fellow deportees caught him stealing their bread rations. He was subjected to cruel beating-up until it was realised that he was really insane. In the Vladivostok transit camp his insanity assumed a still more acute form. He still feared being poisoned and began again to steal food from his fellow inmates in the barracks, believing that their rations, unlike his, were not poisoned. Once again he was brutally beaten up. In the end he was thrown out of the barracks; he went to live near the refuse heap, feeding on garbage. Filthy, with long grey hair and a long beard, dressed in tatters, with a mad look in his eyes, he became a veritable scarecrow of the camp. Occasionally, he was fed by the camp doctors among whom there was one who had known him in Voronezh and admired his poetry.

According to the same source Mandelstam must have died in the Vladivostok transit camp in the spring of 1938. This information, admittedly secondhand, does not quite tally, as far as the date is concerned, with the above-mentioned official version, but, given its source, there is no reason to disbelieve the tragic story itself. If it is true that Mandelstam died in the spring of 1938, it probably means that he just could not stand that life and died before he could be transferred to the permanent camp (in Magadan?). The 'officially' supplied date fails to explain why Mandelstam was kept in Vladivostok so long, though it is possible to suppose that he was officially certified insane and placed in a hospital. Whether the whole story of the tragic end of this great poet will ever be fully told we do not know.

After the death of Blok and the execution of Gumilev in 1921, Maximilian Voloshin wrote his well-known poem about the tragic fate of Russian poets. But even the most unbridled imagination could hardly have enabled him to visualise the still more terrible end of his friend Osip Emilievich Mandelstam, who had not long before the writing of that poem been his guest at Koktebel and whose exquisite poetry he admired so much.

* * *

From another, equally unimpeachable, source comes the poem which Mandelstam wrote about Stalin. Whether it is the 'epigram' for which he is supposed to have paid with his arrest and banishment, is not clear. It is not dated and does not figure in either of the Voronezh Notebooks or in any of the other copies of Mandelstam's poetry circulating abroad. Here it is in a somewhat free translation:

We live unconscious of the country beneath us,
Our talk cannot be heard ten paces away,
And whenever there is enough for half-a-conversation,
The Kremlin highlander is mentioned.

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His thick fingers are fat like worms,
His words hit hard like heavy weights,
His cockroach's huge moustaches laugh,
And the tops of his boots shine brightly.

And around him is a rabble of thickskinned leaders,
He plays with the services of half-men.
Like horseshoes he forges one decree after another,
Hitting some in the forehead, some in the eyebrow,
some in the groin, and some in the eye.

Each execution for him is a plum—
And the broad chest of the Ossete.[10]

MARX AND LUTHER

George Lichtheim

GERMANY, THE original home of Marxism, has in recent years not figured very prominently in the revival of Marxian studies. On the purely bibliographical side there is still nothing like a properly edited edition of Marx's and Engels's collected works on the lines of Ryazanov's incomplete *Gesamtausgabe* of 1927–32. The East German version of the *Works* now in process of completion is a slavish copy of the standard Soviet edition which excludes heretical writings—*e.g.*, the Paris Manuscripts of 1844, or Marx's unflattering account of early Russian history, makes no reference to earlier critical editions, lacks the usual scholarly apparatus, and introduces each volume with self-parodying manifestos in the familiar Stalinist style (any notion that intellectual standards have improved in recent years is adequately disposed of by a perusal of these grotesque prefaces). West of the Wall there are some competently edited and agreeably printed selections for the general reader, and the publications of the Hannover *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*: a small-scale replica of Feltrinelli's magnificent *Annali*. For anything like proper textual criticism of newly edited material one has to go to the publications of the Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, which ought really to be thinking of producing a complete critical edition of the *Works*. There seems little chance of any West German institution undertaking such a task.

The situation is similar in theoretical Marxology properly so called. There are some excellent studies on the early Marx, but on the whole it is the French who since 1945 have made the running. German Marxism seems to have petered out in the swamp of East European dogmatism, or alternatively retreated on to dry ground high above the level where ordinary mortals dwell. This Alpine Redoubt is mainly inhabited by West German and Swiss theologians and/or existentialist philosophers:

10 The word 'plum' in the last line but one stands for the Russian *malina*. This slang term, originally going back to a card-game expression, denotes something particularly good, pleasurable, fortunate. In the last line there is an allusion to Stalin's Ossete origin. The connection between the last two lines is not quite clear, but in his late poetry Mandelstam often used a highly elliptical, allusive method, omitting intermediate logical links, and this inevitably results in some obscurity.

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most of them in the Protestant tradition and thus able to supply the necessary counterpoint to the labours of the French academics, whether Thomist or Marxist. This makes for an interesting Franco-German dialogue, though at several removes from the general public. What West Germany lacks, while France has it in abundance, is a non-academic literature that draws inspiration from the neo-Marxians. Brecht and Bloch may be names to conjure with, but when all is said and done they are veterans from the Weimar period, as are the late Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno. The younger men stick obstinately to their cloistered studies.

This being said, the *Marxismusstudien* published since 1954 on behalf of the *Studiengemeinschaft der Evangelischen Akademien* must be welcomed without reserve. These volumes of learned essays, not all of whose authors are theologians or even Christians, represent a unique accomplishment. It is permissible to feel that had something like it been undertaken a generation earlier, fewer Germans would have sought solace in the writings of irrationalist philosophers. However that may be, the German Evangelical churches and their academic *Studiengemeinschaft* deserve praise for having brought together theologians, philosophers, and historians: socialists and non-socialists, Marxists and anti-Marxists, and made their researches available to the public. Marxism being part of the German intellectual tradition, it is hardly surprising that these studies are both scholarly and *engagées*. In them one encounters thinking Germans reflecting upon the history of their country, even when they deal with such recondite topics as the Hegelian origins of Marx's thought. There is after all no getting away from the fact that the catastrophe of Germany as a nation betwen 1848 and 1948, when the country's eastern half was incorporated in the Soviet orbit, is involved in the history of Marxism, and vice versa. German scholars, even at their most abstract, have a lively sense of such world-historical configurations.

Which is not to say that they cannot be very abstract indeed when they choose. Volume IV of the *Studien*, recently published, is more explicitly theological in intent than its predecessors, which included some extremely challenging investigations into the Social-Democratic tradition by younger post-war neo-Marxians on the left wing of the SPD. By comparison, this latest volume is rather more conservative in tone and, if the truth be told, a trifle stodgy. Three of the five essays are concerned with the religious critique of Marxism, while the remaining two deal in an unexciting manner with Hegelian and Soviet notions about law and society. Of the three theological contributions, Professor Helmut Gollwitzer's lengthy study on Marxism and Christianity is by far the most substantial. Neither Professor Weil on contemporary political philosophy, nor Professor Wendland on the political thought of Paul Tillich, contributes much that is new.

Since Gollwitzer's contribution runs to over 140 closely printed pages, it will have to be enough to say that its confrontation of Marxist atheism and Christian (or at any rate Protestant) existentialism is an impressive piece of work. The author is clearly a product of the Barthian school of Protestant theology. Like Barth, his political sympathies are with the Left, and one may suppose that the post-war re-Christianisation of the SPD has enabled him, and those who think like him, to support that

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party more or less in the spirit in which socialists of Tawney's school have traditionally adhered to the British Labour party. Thus the discussion between Christians and humanists now takes place within German socialism, instead of being a political matter. Clearly this is all to the good. What one makes of the strictly philosophical confrontation is another question. On Gollwitzer's part it involves the assertion that Feuerbach and Marx 'misunderstood' religion, though it is conceded that the kind of radical Christianity which might have caused them to take a kindlier view of the subject was not available in their time. It is interesting that Gollwitzer sees atheism as the common denominator linking liberalism with Marxism. This too is a German phenomenon, though strictly speaking it was the French Revolution which familiarised the Germans with the idea that political revolution presupposed the radical rejection of religious transcendentalism. For Marx, as Gollwitzer rightly says, religion was no longer a problem, but something he had left behind. In this sense he was not strictly an 'atheist', but rather a post-religious thinker. It is evident that it is this phenomenon which constitutes the most alarming problem for the theologian.

The American and British reading publics have recently been favoured with some modish dissertations on this theme, including Professor Tucker's original discovery that German Idealism, from Kant onwards, was 'neurotic'. The contributors to the *Marxismusstudien* fortunately maintain the tradition of discussing philosophical ideas in terms of intellectual history rather than individual psychology, though as theologians they cannot help marvelling at the spiritual blindness of their opponents. Their own critique fastens upon the utopian and messianic aspects of communism, and not unreasonably confronts the absolutist claims of the movement with its underlying moral relativism: if there is no final goal or ultimate sense of history, how do the Marxists manage to escape from the sceptical subjectivism which has already corroded their liberal predecessors? The question is legitimate, even though one may be disinclined to seek refuge in religious irrationalism. It is after all quite possible to soldier on, as it were, without any illusions at all: the Stoic attitude is as old as the Christian, and to some people more congenial. The critic of these thoughtful studies may also wonder whether their aim—a Christianity freed from its Platonist-spiritualist inheritance and ruthlessly reduced to its Biblical or prophetic message—is realisable. However that may be, this confrontation between Marxism and Lutheranism offers proof that post-war Germany is not quite the spiritual desert it often appears to be.

RUSSIAN CLASSICS IN SOVIET JACKETS

R. F. Christian

THE SUBJECT OF Dr Friedberg's book * is the Soviet government's 'nationalisation' of the classics of Russian literature, and the consequences of the state's decision to 'sponsor' and 'whenever possible to make political capital out of' the great literature of the past.

* M. Friedberg. **Russian Classics in Soviet Jackets.** Columbia University Press. 38s.

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While there is virtually no evidence of deliberate tampering with original texts (the only evidence offered by the author is the selection and abridgement of some of the correspondence of Chekhov and Dostoevsky), there are many obvious ways in which the classics can be pressed into Soviet service. First the state can decide which authors and which works to republish. In this connection Dr Friedberg shows that artificial prominence has been given to some writers (e.g. Uspensky) at the expense of others (Tiutchev, Fet); that non-literary considerations may have been responsible for the fact that *Polikushka* and *After the Ball* were among Tolstoy's most widely reprinted works between 1918 and 1941; that Pisemsky's ' reactionary ' novel *Troubled Seas* has never been published in the Soviet Union (a fact for which anyone who has had to wade through it will be grateful!); that many works by Melnikov-Pechersky with a religious background have been allowed to fall into oblivion; that Leskov's *Cathedral Folk* appeared for the first time in the Soviet Union only in 1956—the year which saw the publication of a new and large edition of Dostoevsky after many years of calculated neglect. Secondly, the state can control the size of each edition, and in the case of multi-volume collections discriminate between the more and the less acceptable volumes on the basis of the number of copies published —the figure of 14,000 for the earlier volumes of the 1926 edition of Dostoevsky is in marked contrast to the meagre circulation of the last volume containing his articles—a mere 650 copies. Dr Friedberg classifies the different types of Soviet editions of the classics, designed for the intelligentsia, the proletariat, school-children, and the national minorities respectively, and makes the point that it is the proletarian reader, rather than the intellectual or the school-child, who is the main victim of the state's political discrimination, in so far as this can be exercised by the selection of authors and titles and the size of editions. Thirdly, the state publishing houses can impose on their readers the desired official attitudes to the classics by the judicious use of prefaces, notes, and commentaries, and by the appropriate slant given to widely disseminated works of literary criticism. On the basis of successive changes in official attitudes to Nekrasov, Lermontov, and Leskov (chosen to represent ' progressive ', ' neutral ', and ' reactionary ' writers respectively), the author shows how the classics have been claimed one after another for the Soviet cause, and their authors heralded as the forerunners of current Soviet ideology.

Having dealt fairly fully with literary controls and arbitrary evaluations, Dr Friedberg writes somewhat briefly about the reading habits of the Russians before and after the Revolution, and leads up to his statistically substantiated point that such talented Soviet writers as Fedin and Leonov still cannot compete for popularity with a Mamin-Sibiryak or an Uspensky, and that—in short—Soviet readers prefer the classics.

Anyone familiar with both the Russian classics and the Soviet Union will find little to surprise him in this book, although it may not be commonly realised that in 1913 Russia was the second largest producer of books in the world, or that in 1887 nearly one and a half million copies of Pushkin's works appeared to mark the 50th anniversary of his death. It is unfortunate perhaps that the author has taken so little understanding for granted on the part of his readers, and it is irritating to find Soviet jargon spilling over into the text of the narrative, and to

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have to read such phrases as 'to include Russia's literary heritage in the arsenal of the struggle for the Soviet idea', or 'in the production of actual books the Soviet Union is still lagging behind America'—not to mention Stalin's old favourite 'as is known'.

Apart from these stylistic infelicities, the book suffers in places from repetitiveness and a considerable overlapping of material. On p. 45 we read—the context is pre-1961—'one may ask why there has never been an edition of the complete works of Turgenev', and on p. 49 'there has never been a Soviet edition of Turgenev's complete writings'. The statement in the preface that a very successful struggle against illiteracy had been waged long before 1917 needs to be reconciled more carefully with the remark a few pages later that in post-revolutionary Russia the great bulk of the population were only beginning to learn how to read. The statistics on book output at the end are valuable, but it is not altogether clear why a two-page appendix on the Tolstoy Jubilee Edition has been inserted after them. The few misprints and minor errors noted (e.g. 1960s for 1860s on p. 107; conflicting figures for the output of books in Russia in 1954 in Tables 1 and 4) are of no consequence. But one is left with the impression that a number of articles have been strung together to make a book, and that the material itself—much of it interesting and useful—would be more effective in article form.

In the final paragraphs Dr Friedberg issues a welcome reminder that the Russian classics are the common cultural and spiritual heritage of Russia and the West, and despite his inevitably inconclusive speculations on their liberalising and humanising effect on the Soviet reader, it is an encouraging fact that common literary interests still play an important part in fostering friendly relations between East and West.

DOSTOYEVSKY

Victor S. Frank

WHAT HAPPENS when a witty, urbane, intelligent critic, a don *moyen sensuel*, picks on a half-mad religious genius as his quarry? As Dr Hingley's study of Dostoyevsky's work* shows, the result is likely to be a delightful book necessarily marred by certain serious flaws.

To take the delights first: The book is tightly knit. The flow of narrative is controlled not so much by chronology, as by the skilful unfolding of Dostoyevsky's thematic wealth, craftsmanship, and character. Dr Hingley has a number of wise things to say about the contrapuntal structure of the great novels and about Dostoyevsky's psychological mastery displayed in the portrayal of his weird and wonderful characters. Serious in intent and scholarly in execution, the book makes for absorbing reading and abounds in pithy formulas and subtle observations. I liked Dr Hingley's simple and precise definition of the world peculiar to Dostoyevsky's genius: 'Humanity under strain'. I also liked his saying that whereas Chekhov was an observer of others, Dostoyevsky was an

* Ronald Hingley. **The Undiscovered Dostoyevsky.** Hamish Hamilton, London, 1962. 25s. net.

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observer of Dostoyevsky. I found Dr Hingley's mordant wit a delight: 'This formula ["I was not drunk"] is invoked so often in Dostoyevsky's fiction as to give the impression that all his characters are to be presumed drunk until proved sober.'

With all that, however, the book has two serious flaws. The first is this: Dostoyevsky's novels are not only brilliantly constructed whodunnits, not only subtle studies in morbid psychology. They are also dramatised meditations on 'the four last things'. Dr Hingley, while doing full justice to the first two aspects, studiously ignores or even deprecates the third. Dostoyevsky's discoveries in the field of ontological psychology are dismissed as so much 'Dostoyevskyism'. Religious verities restated by Dostoyevsky in a novel and paradox manner are viewed as an odd psychological fad.

> Whether political or non-political—Dr Hingley writes with reference to the conspirators in *The Devils*—Man-without-Dostoyevskyism is demonstrated as equally bankrupt (p. 157);

and in a brilliant analysis of the plot of *The Brothers Karamazov* he remarks ironically:

> Dostoyevsky found no difficulty in regarding Ivan as the principal in the crime and Smerdyakov as an assistant. Ivan was an intelligent man who chose not to believe in Dostoyevskyism, Smerdyakov merely banged an old man on the head (p. 201).

'It is possible', he says, 'to be a sincere admirer of Dostoyevsky's art without being at all a disciple of Dostoyevskyism'. This is a perfectly tenable position. What is untenable is to dismiss Dostoyevsky's beliefs as something irrelevant to his art. Would an agnostic art historian study a Gothic cathedral merely as an assembly of gargoyles and as an exercise in architectural techniques? Would he dismiss the idea determining the orientation of the nave as a personal fad of the builder? Would he ignore the belief underlying the organisation of space, the belief that the building was a house of God?

Yet that is exactly what Dr Hingley does to Dostoyevsky. He has chosen to dismiss as irrelevant the notion of God and the conception of the human soul as the battleground of Good and Evil. In effect he never lifts his eyes above the purely psychological level. Here is an example of Dr Hingley's mode of argument:

> He [Dostoyevsky] seems to have used his religious strivings, based on the freedom of conscience championed in the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor, in the same way as he had once used his gambling, financial scrapes, and love affairs, as a means of keeping himself in the condition of agonised suspense which he found so gratifying (p. 224).

The passage sounds like a remark by a blind man baffled by the agitation of a man endowed with sight. Even if accurate on the psychological level, it is obviously inadequate as a comment on the contents of the legend.

The second major flaw springs from the ambiguity of the concept of 'humour' as used by Dr Hingley. In his preface he says that one significant aspect has almost escaped attention in the voluminous criticism of

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Dostoyevsky—his humour, and that it has been his hope to redress the balance. Dr Hingley himself wisely remarks that ' there is no department of criticism which lends itself less readily to demonstration than humour '. Admittedly, one man's joke is another man's poison. But there are certain basic principles on which most critics would agree. One is that situations in which formally comic ingredients are subordinated to a tragic purpose, are meant by the author to arouse pity and not laughter. Dostoyevsky himself has an excellent definition of humour (in reference to Don Quixote and Mr Pickwick):

> Pity is aroused for the Good which is mocked and does not know its own value, and the reader's sympathy is consequently also awakened. It is this evocation of sympathy which constitutes the secret of humour (quoted on p. 111).

This is perfectly clear. Dr Hingley's definition of what constitutes humour in Dostoyevsky's novels is not. It oscillates between a craftsman's admiration for the sophisticated and perverse banana-skin incidents devised by Dostoyevsky, and laughing *at* Dostoyevsky's own quirks.

> The view which will be put forward here—says Dr Hingley in his Chapter on *The Idiot*—is that Myshkin is a comic figure. As for the suggestion sometimes made that he represents a serious ethical ideal, this is perhaps the richest piece of comedy about him.

And why does Dr Hingley find Prince Myshkin a comic figure? Because (a) Madame Yepanchina ' insists on treating him as a combination of small child and harmless lunatic, nodding in unison with his every word and even offering to tie a napkin round his neck '; (b) because, all warnings and precautions notwithstanding, he succeeds in breaking a valuable Chinese vase and suffers an epileptic fit to boot; and (c) because he is generally futile. But if one is guided by Dostoyevsky's definition of humour (which Dr Hingley quotes with approval), Myshkin is a perfect example of the Good which is being mocked. When fools insist on treating him as an idiot, or when he is socially disgraced by breaking a vase, the feelings he generates are compassion and love, not gloating.

Or to take another example. Can Katerina Ivanovna in *Crime and Punishment* be really treated as a figure of fun? It may be argued that in creating this tubercular, half-demented mother of three starving children, this wife (and later, widow) of a dipsomaniac, Dostoyevsky has strayed into melodrama. The scene in which the irate landlady turns the dying Katerina Ivanovna into the street, and the poor madwoman puts her three children into improvised fancy dress and tries to make them sing and dance in the street to collect money from passers-by, may be considered an outrageous tear-jerker and may provoke laughter as a self-defence against sentimental tears. But there is nothing inherently *funny* about the scene. And yet Dr Hingley is not so sure: ' Like Marmeladov, she [Katerina Ivanovna] poses some unanswerable questions about Dostoyevsky's humour ', he says; ' to stress unduly the comic elements in this grotesque couple would be callous, while to deny their presence would be ridiculous '.

What is the common cause of both these flaws? Would it be wrong to say that Dr Hingley not only does not share Dostoyevsky's belief in God (why should he?), but is also not quite certain what such an odd

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belief is all about? 'To Dostoyevsky—he says—man was a dangerous, unpredictable, cruel creature whom he feared so much that it later became necessary to him to believe in God'.

The first clause is perfectly correct. The second is wrong, biographically and psychologically. Dr Hingley attempts to cut Dostoyevsky down to the size of a mid-20th century neurotic agnostic. And that is a forlorn attempt. Indeed, he realises the ambiguity of his own assertions, for on p. 125 he contradicts what he has been saying of Prince Myshkin earlier on: 'The humour which surrounds Myshkin cuts much deeper and is an elusive affair, the roots of which cannot all be satisfactorily traced'.

Here Dr Hingley is delving deeper into the soil of Dostoyevskian territory; perhaps in a later book he will reach the roots.

FROM THE FINLAND STATION

John Keep

THERE ARE BOOKS whose significance lies less in the nature of their contents than in the sheer fact of their appearance from the pen of a particular author. This is the case with *The Soviet Revolution*.* Outwardly it is a straightforward history of the Soviet Union from the revolution to the Hitler-Stalin pact. But in essence it is an account of the betrayal of an ideal: the hopes and longings evoked in 1917, when it seemed for a brief moment as though the long-suffering Russian people were at last about to enjoy both freedom and social progress. Instead this mass enthusiasm was manipulated to establish a communist dictatorship, and to undertake a vast programme of social engineering which reduced the individual citizen to the position of a cog in an impersonal bureaucratic machine. The upshot was a tyrannical system garbed in socialist phraseology, but utterly unlike that to which the early socialist thinkers had aspired.

'The Soviet Union today', writes Mr Abramovitch, 'is inordinately proud of its super-rockets, long-range missiles, and hydrogen bombs. But it was the freedom and happiness of men, rather than their destruction by super-weapons, that the founders of socialism had in mind when they elaborated their basic tenets and their programmes. Nikita Khrushchev sees these technological successes as an extraordinary manifestation of "cultural" progress. But similar "success" was last witnessed in 1942–45 when Nazi Germany outstripped all the major powers in the production of tanks, Stuka bombers and V-2 rockets. Is it conceivable that "victorious socialism" can develop no better formula for human progress than the designing of ever more powerful weapons for destruction? . . . All revolutions have been a fairly savage means of achieving a measure of progress. The English Revolution in the 17th century and the French Revolution in the 18th were no exception. But can it be said

* Raphael R. Abramovitch. **The Soviet Revolution, 1917–1939.** Introduction by Sidney Hook. International Universities Press, Inc., New York, 1962. 473 pp. $7.50.

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that the Russian, or for that matter the Chinese, revolution are steps along the road to progress ? We do not think so. No one who has lived in a totalitarian state and is familiar with its internal functioning can believe that this savagery will ever contribute to the cultural development or well-being of mankind. For totalitarian rule is not so much anti-capitalist as it is anti-human.'

This impassioned judgment, which some may think a shade too severe, reflects the indignation of a man, now in his ninth decade, who has remained loyal to the ideals of the movement with which he has been associated throughout his life. Raphael Abramovitch joined the Jewish Bund, an affiliate organisation of the Russian Social-Democratic party, while still a student, and came to occupy a position of authority among its leaders. He spent much of his early manhood in emigration, and it was as an 'internationalist', firmly opposed to the 'imperialist war', that he returned to his homeland in 1917. The Bolshevik seizure of power violated his innermost convictions. Among Russian intellectuals of the left it was axiomatic that minority rule could lead only to civil war, and ultimately to the victory of 'counter-revolution'. On the first point, at least, they were soon proved right by events. In the 'Red Terror' of 1918 Abramovitch himself was arrested. His wife was brought to his prison to bid him farewell before his execution, which, he was told, had been definitely decided on by the Party central committee. Fortunately Ryazanov, an eminently humane Bolshevik leader and a family friend, successfully intervened on his behalf. Along with many other figures prominent in the Russian labour movement, Abramovitch was permitted to leave Russia in 1920. Forty more years as an emigré —first in Germany, and then in the United States—have not lessened his devotion to the cause of an enlightened and democratic socialism. Under his editorship the *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* (Socialist Courier) has become the most venerable Russian-language periodical published in the Western world. Abramovitch's articles on Soviet affairs display a remarkable grasp of the facts and a passionate integrity that inspires deep respect.

The Soviet Revolution is presented as the author's 'intellectual testament'. It is characteristic both of the man and of his political creed that this should take the form of a history rather than a conventional memoir. Many students of Russia will regret the choice. Although he did publish his reminiscences in 1944, they are unfortunately available only in Yiddish. The present volume is too selective in content and documentation to satisfy the rather exacting requirements made of an authoritative history. Nevertheless it does contain a number of useful insights. The best sections are those dealing with the author's part in the abortive negotiations that followed the Bolshevik *coup* for the establishment of an all-socialist coalition. It is good to be reminded that in November 1917 the Soviet government issued a decree guaranteeing freedom of the press, mention of which is nowadays taboo. Another curious document reproduced here (from Mr Nikolaevsky's archive) is a secret circular dating from 1923, containing regulations for the control of library stocks. It prescribed that the works of 'bourgeois' philosophers, ranging from Kant to Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy, should be removed from the shelves and kept in special book-cases. 'Obsolete propaganda and reference

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literature published by Soviet organs in 1918, 1919, and 1920,' it ran, ' on questions which are now being given a different solution by the Soviet government (agrarian question, system of taxation, free trade, food supply policy, etc.) must be removed from the smaller libraries serving the ordinary reader.' Also readily available in this volume is the full story of the circumstances surrounding the publication by *Sotsialisticheskii Vestnik* in 1936 of the famous ' letter of an Old Bolshevik ', the author of which was Bukharin.

If the greater part of the material that fills these pages, as well as the analysis given of the Soviet system, seems familiar to English-speaking readers, this is in part due to the services performed by the author and his colleagues, who may well have influenced ' orthodox ' Sovietology more than is generally suspected. There are some tantalisingly brief allusions here to the evolution of Menshevik thinking in the 1930s. The Austrian socialist Rudolf Hilferding appears to have been primarily responsible for the author's own conversion to the view that ' the Bolshevik regime was a new form of society which was neither socialism nor capitalism but belonged in the group of totalitarian states along with Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy.' Most Mensheviks accepted this thesis in preference to the theory of a natural coexistence between socialism and communism, popular among their colleagues in the Labour and Socialist International, who tended to be deceived by Stalin's propaganda machine. This idea was finally killed—in Europe, at any rate—by developments during and after World War II.

The period after 1939 was to have been covered by Mr Abramovitch in a second volume, but he was unable to obtain sufficient support for his project. *The Soviet Revolution* was made possible only through the liberality of several United States labour organisations. ' Various American foundations, known to have extended generous grants sponsoring scientific and historical research, were approached without success.' This seems most regrettable: one hopes Mr Abramovitch will find a better response in future. An unparalleled contribution to the understanding of Soviet and communist affairs can be made by emigré writers, particularly those with first-hand experience of the labour movement. Apart from the intrinsic interest of such studies, which makes them well worth pursuing for their own sake, it cannot be said too often that the world conflict is first and foremost a struggle for men's minds.

USSR AND UNO

A. R.

THE AUTHOR * states in his foreword (p. vi) that he has not attempted to give a case-by-case account of Soviet performance at the United Nations, and many areas of United Nations activity are left almost unexplored—economic and social problems, human rights and the International Court of Justice, to mention a few. This important reservation must be borne

* Alexander Dallin, **The Soviet Union at the United Nations.** An Enquiry into Soviet Motives and Objectives. Frederick A. Praeger, New York. 1962. $5.75.

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in mind when assessing the merits of the book, which, as its sub-title indicates, is more in the nature of a synopsis of Soviet attitudes and policies towards the United Nations than an all-embracing and definitive work on the subject.

Within its restricted framework, however, it is well done, and the general reader will feel only gratitude that, for example, such a thorny and tangled question as disarmament is condensed into some eighteen pages. Despite the brevity of the work, the author does not forget to look at first causes. Few people realise, or bother to remember, that the Soviet attitude to the United Nations has its roots in the pre-war era. The Soviet Union at first regarded the League of Nations with great suspicion as a tool of capitalism. Later this view was modified in the interest of collective security, but Moscow's hopes came to nothing because of the League's pusillanimity in face of the threat from the Axis powers. Obviously these memories would have coloured the Soviet attitude to the United Nations in its early years, quite apart from Stalin's pathological chauvinism. Given this situation, together with the emergence of the 'two camps' view of the world, it was small wonder that the USSR was determined from the start to keep the United Nations as weak as possible by means of the veto.

Why did the USSR join in the first place? Mr Dallin rightly says that, when the brief afterglow of the wartime collaboration with the West had faded, Moscow saw the United Nations as a useful weapon in the Cold War, with particular reference to the anti-colonial campaign. Moreover, the Korean experience showed how effective an opponent the organisation could be if the Soviet representative was not present to veto any 'adverse' initiative.

The post-Stalin thaw brought, as Mr Dallin puts it, 'an up-grading of the United Nations as an instrument of potential value for the USSR' (p. 39). In the more flexible era of 'peaceful coexistence', the United Nations became a forum for the promotion of Moscow's idea of peace and for its untiring efforts to draw the ex-colonial countries away from the West. In fact the organisation appeared to have achieved some respectability in Soviet eyes. After years of boycott, the USSR joined the ILO and UNESCO. A branch of the UN Association (albeit an impotent one) was opened in Moscow. The Hungarian uprising, which might have permanently distorted this new Soviet line, was offset by Suez.

The book then proceeds to a rather more detailed account of Khrushchev's attitude to the United Nations during the last few years. There are useful chapters describing *inter alia* the Soviet record in the Specialised Agencies and an interesting, if brief, account of the manner in which the organisation is projected domestically by Soviet propaganda. In this connection, Mr Dallin does well to point out that the main communist documents on contemporary affairs—e.g. *The Basic Principles of Marxism-Leninism*, the new CPSU programme, and the Moscow statement of 81 Communist parties in November 1960—contain no reference

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to the United Nations. This eloquently indicates its position in the Soviet scale of values.

What does emerge very clearly from Mr Dallin's narrative is the essential opportunism of Soviet policy (e.g. over events in the Congo). Nor is it possible to see any prospect of a change in this attitude so long as the Soviet leaders are motivated by chronic suspicion of the Western world. On the other hand, with more and more uncommitted countries becoming members, the United States cannot always expect to have an automatic majority as in the past, and this may induce Moscow to pay more regard to the organisation. Too much must not be expected of the United Nations *per se* in the cause of peace, however. The dictum still holds good that it depends for success on the will of the Great Powers.

STRATEGY AND FOREIGN POLICY

L. V.

THE IDEA OF describing Soviet foreign policy since 1944 from the point of view of an expert on Soviet military affairs was a good one. The close connection between diplomacy and military power is one of the clichés of history but is no less fascinating for that. Mr Mackintosh* does not make the mistake of confining his attention to this aspect alone. Economic, political, and personal considerations are not neglected, and, in the main, are competently treated. The author is, however, somewhat less happy in the wider context than when he is dealing with his own particular field.

To illustrate: In analysing the reasons for the outbreak of the Korean War, he notes the importance of the American view that South Korea was strategically untenable (vide statements by Mr Acheson early in 1950), and the effect this had on the USSR's and therefore North Korea's calculations regarding a successful take-over of South Korea (p. 44). He also stresses the military preparedness of the North Koreans in comparison with the South. All this is well said, but nowhere is the root cause of the crisis brought out—the intense, even fanatical, desire of Koreans, both North and South, for the reunification of their country—a desire which was grist to the Soviet mill, particularly when it coincided with what they took for apathy on the part of the Americans.

Some of the author's comments on the post-Stalin struggle for power display a certain political innocence. The footnote on p. 72 is a good example: 'Mr Malenkov's readiness to hand over the key post of First Party Secretary is one of the most puzzling acts of his brief career as Premier. There is no evidence that he was under pressure from his colleagues, and yet his experience with Stalin must have made him aware of the great power of the party post. If it was a miscalculation on his part, it led straight to his downfall in 1955.' Without the last sentence,

* J. M. Mackintosh. **Strategy and Tactics of Soviet Foreign Policy.** London O.U.P. 1962. 38s.

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this might have been a possible comment, though a rather naïve one, soon after the event or conceivably for some eighteen months thereafter. It has simply not been tenable since late 1954, when the rivalry between Malenkov and Khrushchev became public knowledge—still less tenable subsequently, when Malenkov lost the struggle. No Soviet politician in these circumstances would 'readily' give up this supremely important post; the fact that Malenkov did give it up shows that he *was* under pressure from his colleagues.

Incidentally, it is quite untrue that Malenkov 'was not an initiator of foreign policy in 1953 and 1954' (p. 87). One has only to think of the change in attitude (however temporary) towards Turkey and Iran; or the 'New Course' in Eastern Europe; or Malenkov's speech to the Supreme Soviet on 8 August 1953. Mr Mackintosh himself does not believe this statement. On p. 119 we read that 'even before the dismissal of Mr Malenkov the first steps had been taken by the Soviet Government to formulate a policy of economic and political penetration of the Arab countries'; on p. 134 that 'it is not difficult to see, from the change which came over Soviet policy towards India after 1953, that the Soviet Government had launched a major economic, political and cultural offensive to drive a wedge between India and the West. . . . Initially begun by Mr Malenkov, the campaign was taken over by Mr Khrushchev in 1955'; and on p. 305, 'within weeks of Stalin's death his successors began to repair the bridges linking the Soviet Union to the outside world'.

Or take the statement on p. 88 that 'one reason for Mr Malenkov's fall was certainly a personal struggle for power between himself and Mr Khrushchev'. It was in fact the only reason. Certainly there were genuine differences of opinion over policy, particularly over agriculture and the increased output of consumer goods, but these would not of themselves have ensured his demotion. The point gains emphasis from the fact that many of his policies were subsequently appropriated by the victorious Khrushchev.

Another case where the use of a particular word suggests that the author has misread the signs of the power struggle occurs on p. 163. The occasion is the visit to Warsaw in October 1956 by Soviet leaders to prevent any further deterioration of the situation in Poland. The delegation is described as 'a powerful one, headed by Mr Khrushchev himself and including Mr Kaganovich, Mr Mikoyan, and, surprisingly, Mr Molotov, who had taken no part in foreign affairs since his dismissal as Foreign Minister in June'. The reason why Molotov and Kaganovich went is obvious. They were two of Khrushchev's strongest opponents, the leading representatives of conservative and Stalinist opinion within the Party. Either Khrushchev included them to forestall further criticism over the Polish events or else they were still powerful enough to insist on accompanying him. Similarly when Khrushchev attended a meeting of European communist leaders in Budapest the following January he included Malenkov in the Soviet delegation (p. 193).

It is also not clear whether the author has fully understood the reasons for the de-Stalinisation campaign, Khrushchev's secret speech at the Twentieth Party congress, and the formulation of the doctrine of the differing roads to socialism (pp. 150–154). They were all part of Khrushchev's grand design for the capture of the world for communism

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by example. The stains (or some of them at least) on the Soviet record must be freely admitted (provided Khrushchev's own reputation remained immaculate) and consigned to the past with the dead dictator. The attack on Stalin was therefore much more than a move in the struggle for the supreme leadership, as is suggested on p. 154. It was part of the search for respectability in the eyes of the liberals, the non-communist left and the uncommitted throughout the world. Unfortunately for Khrushchev, the effect on the client states of Eastern Europe was more electric than he bargained for and Soviet hegemony there received a severe shock. It was not Khrushchev's 'ruthless pursuit of the new policy' (p. 152) but rather the interpretation by the East Europeans of the ideas of the twentieth congress which aroused a bewildering mixture of disillusionment and hope, leading in the case of Hungary to the tragic events of the following October.

The account of the Suez affair (pp. 179–190) is notable for its clarity, though here too there are weaknesses. The Soviet Union's active interest in Egypt is rightly dated from the Czech arms deal in the summer of 1955 (p. 123). There is, however, in this connection no mention of the very important visit to Cairo at that time of Shepilov, the editor of *Pravda*, newly appointed a Secretary of the Central Committee and promoted to the position of Foreign Minister within the year. The author's thesis that the arms deal with Egypt was aimed at Iraq, the only Arab member of the Baghdad Pact, in an effort to sap the confidence of the Iraqi people in their government, appears to be coloured by the 1958 revolution in that country. This event was, however, just as unexpected for the Russians as for everyone else, and it smacks of hindsight to say that they had this in mind three years earlier. It is far more likely that they were trying to by-pass the Baghdad Pact as a whole and build up the power of the states in its rear.

The author is to be congratulated on his exposé of the hollowness of Soviet aid to Egypt during the actual fighting—the propaganda flourish of the rocket threat, the refusal to allow Egypt to use the IL-28 jet-bombers which the USSR itself had supplied, and the tardy offer of 'volunteers'. His summing up is sound but should have included a reference to the grave split in British public opinion as one of the reasons for the failure of the whole operation.

A more controversial point is the assessment of Khrushchev's foreign policy as an attempt to establish a western bastion in Europe and an eastern one based on China, leaving a general area in the Middle East and Africa where the USSR could manoeuvre to its heart's content. This is an oversimplified description which takes no account of, say, Khrushchev's efforts in the mid-fifties to lure the European social-democratic parties into a united front or his attempts to prise Japan from America's side. In trying to prove the correctness of his interpretation, the author makes the somewhat astonishing statement (p. 149) that 'had the Soviet Government been interested in the spread of communism by force of arms in the Far East, nothing would have been easier than to help China to seize Formosa'. In fact, nothing would have been harder, given (a) American sea and air power in the area, and (b) the ultimate danger of atomic war. Both the Russians and the Chinese were well aware of these facts.

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Lest the foregoing criticisms leave too negative an impression, it must be said that the book has its strong points. The chapters dealing with the Soviet defence debate of 1953 to 1956, with Soviet thinking on war, with the role of economic power, and with the continuing aims of Soviet foreign policy can be highly recommended. They contain some shrewd observations—for instance that Khrushchev 'understood the value of conceding inessential points while remaining adamant on issues involving the security of the communist bloc' (p. 141). Or, when describing Soviet policy in South-East Asia (p. 139), 'a feudal prince who would co-operate with Moscow or Peking was more welcome than a government elected on a socialist programme which would not'. Mr Mackintosh also brings out well the importance of economic penetration as the handmaiden of Soviet foreign policy and rightly says that its role is likely to increase as the freedom of action of all states becomes circumscribed by the fear of nuclear war.

In sum, a book which should have been better than it is, but which even so should not be overlooked either by the expert or the general reader.

PLANNING IN POLAND

Alfred Zauberman

THIS BOOK* IS NOT about Poland's economic life. Yet it is indispensable for everybody interested in the economy of Poland and indeed of the Soviet bloc, if only because of the many thoughtful comments on the course of its development. For example, the author establishes a remarkably close correlation, since 1949, between investment policies of bloc countries and political developments in the Soviet Union; hence his contention that Poland's long-range planning can be no more insulated from events in the rest of the bloc than from its own political life.

Polish planning is the theme of Professor Montias' work. He is one of the leading Western students of the Eastern command-species of planning, and he has a special interest in Poland; and this book is a masterly work. To be more precise, it is a chronologically organised story of Poland's post-war experiments in centralist control of the economy—of her planning institutions, procedures, techniques, and tools, interwoven with analytical discussion and enriched by several important excursions into the general theory of problems as they emerge. The country's experience lends itself particularly well to this kind of inquiry for a variety of reasons. One is the relative abundance of information (indeed the writer clearly had some difficulty in resisting the temptation to pack the work too densely with too many details, sometimes at the expense of continuity of narrative or argument). Secondly, Poland's 'climate' helps to keep open the lines of East-West intellectual communication in many fields, including economics. At the same time, none of the reforms in economic

* John Michael Montias, **Central Planning in Poland**, New Haven and London: Yale University Press. 1962. pp. xi plus 410.

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administration after 1956, which led to certain divergencies between Poland and the USSR, has had a decisive effect on the nature of what he terms the 'co-ordinating problem' faced by the two countries' planning agencies.

The problem presents itself in two specific and inter-connected questions. One is the desirable or necessary degree of centralism in decision-taking. The other is the kind of tools the planner is to employ in shaping his own decisions and in prompting the lower echelons along the path leading to his goals. It is here that price becomes crucial. Since there is no practical possibility for the planner to have at hand all the numerous and complex data for fixing optimal or 'efficient' outputs of commodities, he must rely on rational prices for guidance. And the snag is that where there is no effective market, such prices cannot be fixed without reference to 'efficient' outputs. The dilemma is circular: it 'is like putting salt on a bird's tail in order to catch it: if you can get that close you don't need salt' (p. 46). Professor Montias himself has in fact supplied some kind of *ersatz*-salt, and provided the rationale of its application. In his previous writings he designed a model of successive approximations to consistency, and to this extent to efficiency, of a central plan, which may even have influenced the thinking of Polish planners. This model is reconstructed and expounded in the present work. (This reviewer, for one, regrets that Professor Montias gave only a brief footnote to the alternative theoretical solution, that of formal programming, linear or otherwise, which simultaneously yields both optimum outputs and rational prices. Presumably he does not believe that it is practicable at this stage on an all-national scale. But it has made a significant didactic impact on Polish and Soviet economics.)

Curiously enough, the open rebellion of the Polish economists at their Poznan congress against over-centralisation and defective planning methods preceded the Poznan rising of workers and the political thaw. Almost immediately after the memorable events of 1956 some basic conceptions of a reformed economic model were set forth by the Polish Economic Council: their focus was a methodology of pricing clearly deviating from the Soviet concept of cost-price and akin to that of a scarcity price. But the heroic debate around this model fizzled out in a woolly compromise solution which emasculated it. Since the late 1950s Poland's economy has been passing through a phase of re-centralisation.

In Montias' estimate, representative Polish economic thought has by now reconciled itself to the fact that deep-reaching decentralisation is not feasible. He is inclined to believe that Polish economists are ready to accept the fundamental premises of the Soviet model, but hope to improve it 'from the inside'. He points to the Polish pioneer studies in the Western-developed input-output method as a way of improving the coherence of plans which are still essentially based on the Soviet-type material balances. More generally, in Montias' view, the Poles are willing to apply Western economic tools, but only to the extent to which they can be turned to good account in the solution of concrete problems. This may be too narrow an estimate of Polish aspirations, but it does reflect the prevailing Polish mood.

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* *What treatment do the Chinese accord to visitors?*
* *What effect does a visit to China have on an Asian; a European; a Communist?*
* *Do the big National Day parades really impress visitors?*
* *Can scholars do research in China?*
* *How many foreign students have gone to China?*
* *What are the motives for China's massive investment in bringing foreign visitors to Peking?*

These are some of the questions discussed in Herbert Passin's

CHINA'S CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

which is an incisive analysis of a neglected but vital aspect of China's foreign policy methods. On the basis of the experiences of a number of Asian and European countries, it assesses the impact on foreigners of visits to China, of 'cultural missions', of the tours of Chinese theatrical groups and of all the thousand and one exchanges that go on between China and the outside world.

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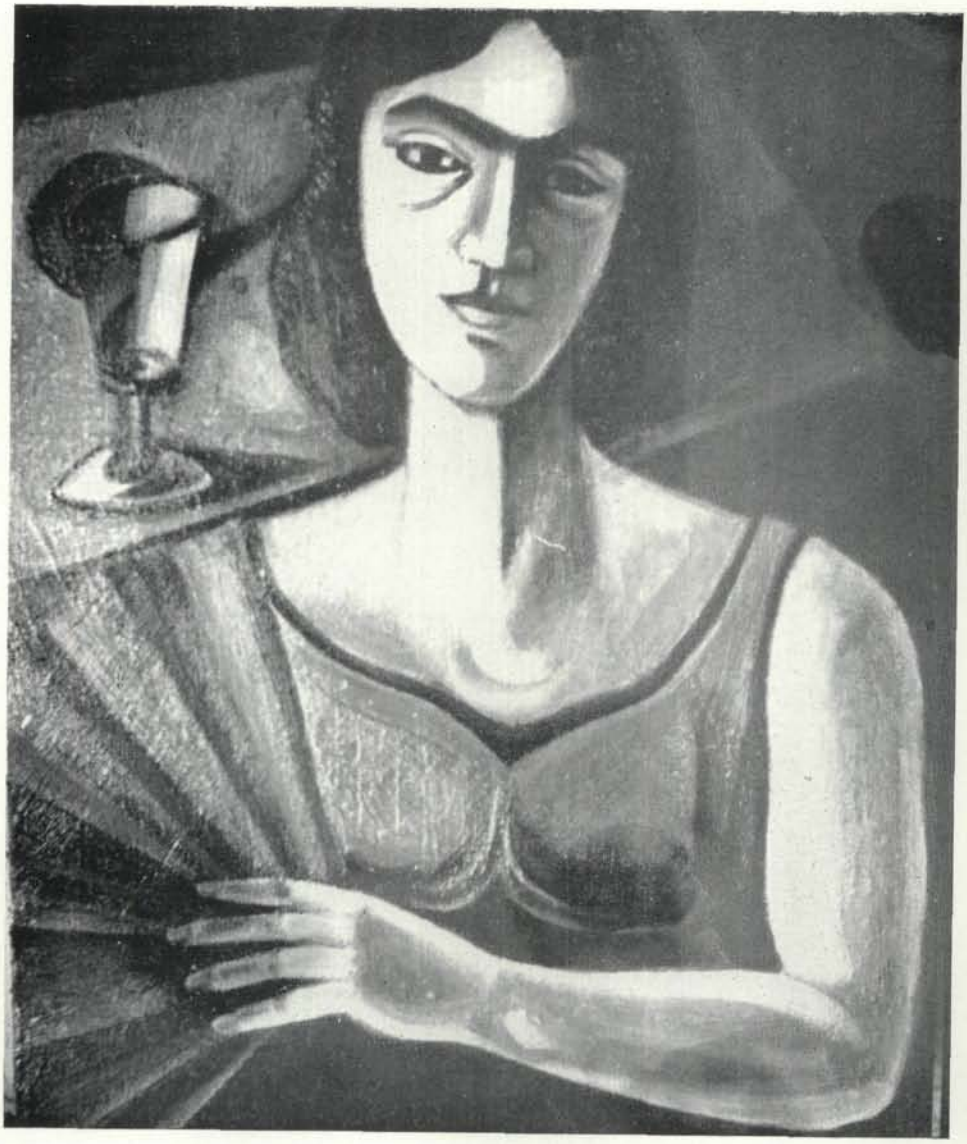

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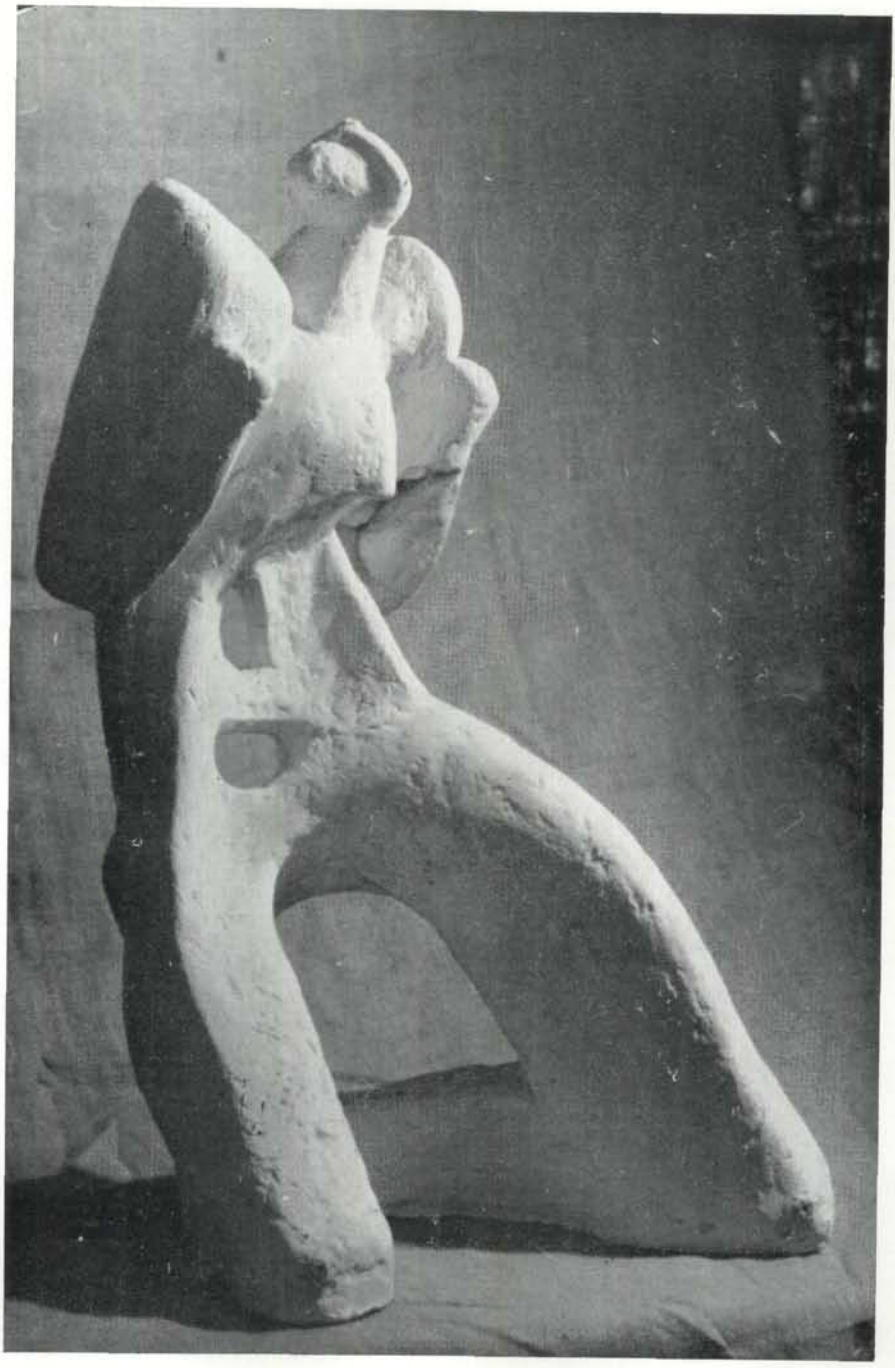

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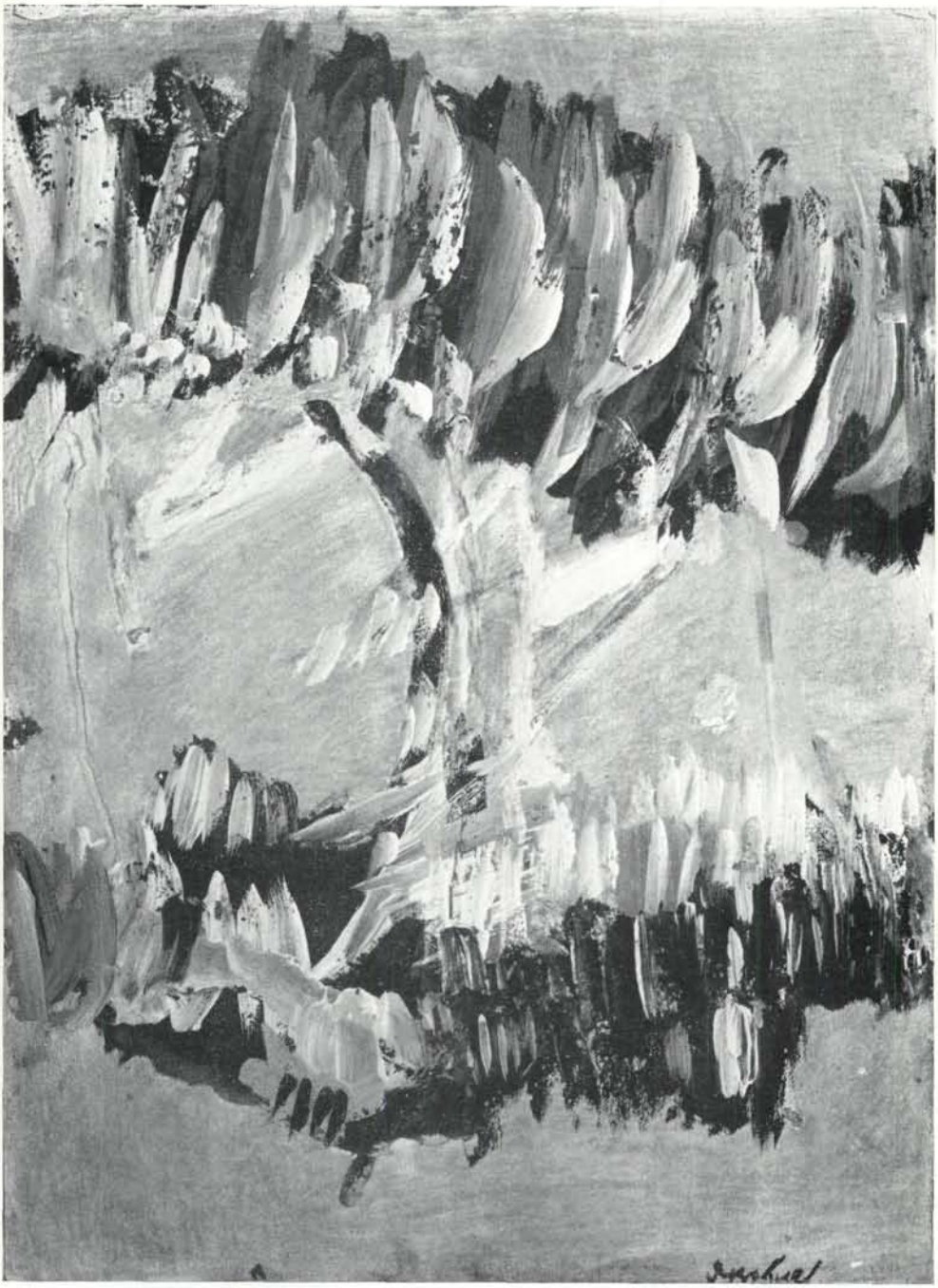

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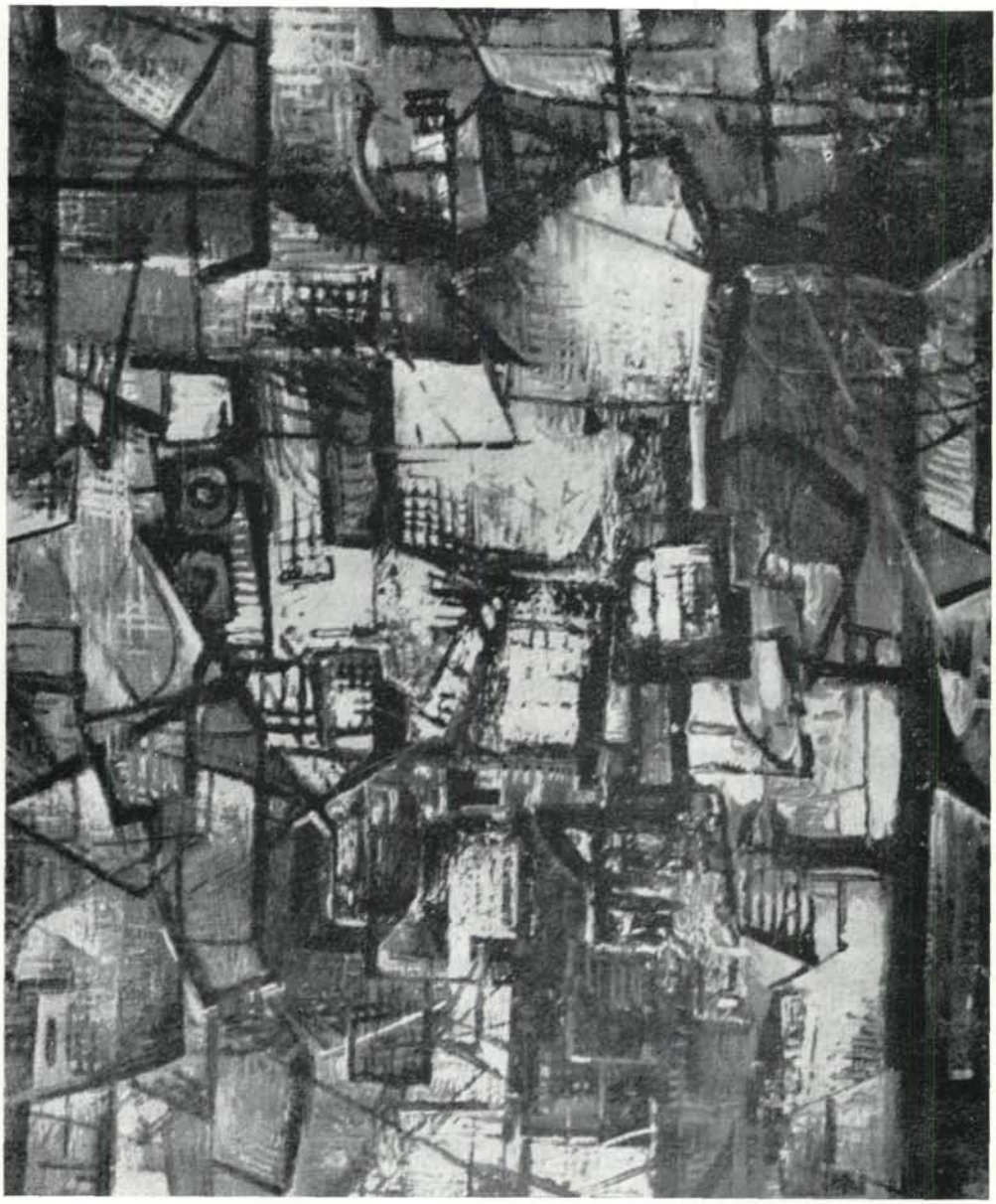

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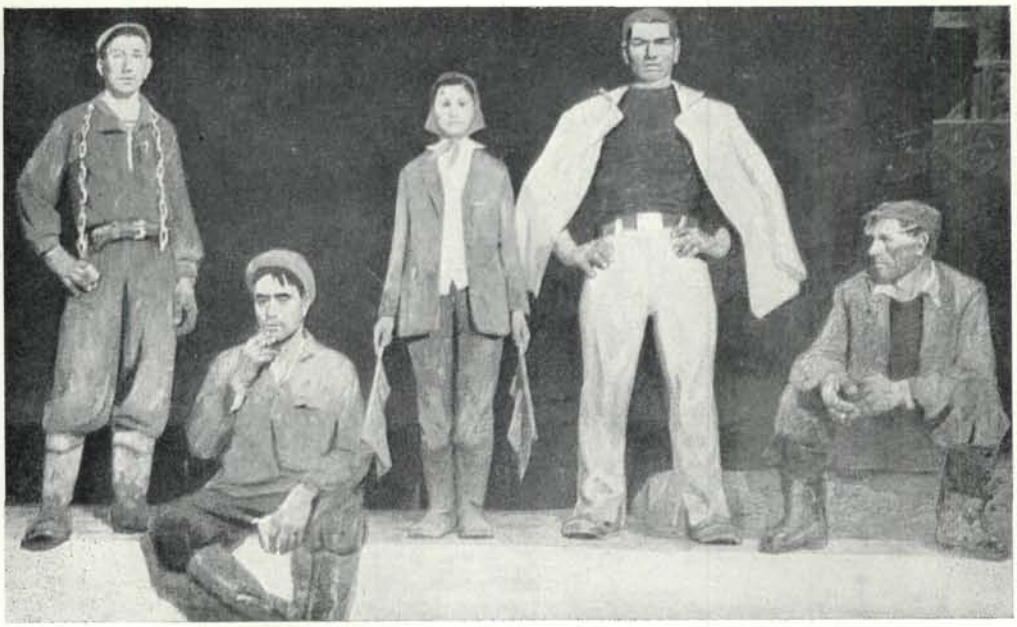

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